

Gender Politics in 21st Century Literacy Reform

This paper is a response to the troubling realisation that women in the 21st century do not have just representation in literacy reform. Improving literacy data has become a matter of government concern across the globe as economic security is increasingly linked to knowledge. However, research into literacy reform, in particular the Queensland Government's *Literate Futures* undertaken by during the period 2001 to 2004, has shown that the process of developing and implementing high stakes literacy policy remains a gendered mine field. Although women were involved at all levels in the production, circulation and reception process (Blackmore, 2010, p. 103), their stories reveal continuing inequity in terms of pay and conditions as fought for by second-wave feminists, but also in more complex and personally challenging ways. Research is showing that the process of improving literacy outcomes requires both a strong commitment to reform and a deep knowledge of effective practice on which to build that reform (Blackmore, 2010; Elmore, 2006). In this essay I will explore the nature of emotion work and feminine pedagogies (Boler, 1999), two significant, but not usually considered factors contributing to the success of literacy reform.

Historically, because the vast majority of early and primary years' teachers in many countries across the world are women, the teaching of reading has been women's work. Traditionally it is women who assist the young to bridge the gap from the discourses of home and community into the discourses of schooling and the complex world of print. In academia, the teaching of reading is recognised as a specialised field informed by research into children's' growth and development, particularly in language (Christie, 2005; Halliday, 2009), the reading process (Hirsch, 2003; Paris, 2005) and the critical influence of social and cultural factors (Baker & Luke, 1988; Mc Naughton, 2002; Timperley & Robinson, 2001). The professional early years' teacher draws on extensive and complex research to provide engaging learning opportunities that respond to the particular needs and interests of each child within the requirements of state devised curriculum. More recently, with the extension of compulsory education into secondary schooling, the teaching of reading has included a focus on reading in the content areas, thereby establishing reading as a significant responsibility for all teachers in both primary and secondary schools (Lee & Spratley, 2010; Wyatt-Smith & Cumming, 2003).

It has been without exception that interviews with women involved at all levels in Education Queensland's *Literate Futures* initiative were accompanied by raw passion even though five

or more years have passed since the project was drawn to a close. Clearly, exceptional levels of emotional energy were involved. This unexpected finding led to the question of why it was that so many people, particularly women, invested significant emotional labour into this reform, from within the bureaucracy to the school level. From a feminist perspective, government bureaucracies responsible for reform are institutional sites of political power embodying masculinist hegemony that consistently fail to take account of and respond to other viewpoints (Blackmore, 2005). Blackmore argues that resistance and failure to address issues of gender have long been ignored in educational policy; and more recently, Yates (2008) claims that the issue of who speaks remains one important political perspective on research and on policy making that deserves ongoing attention. It is from the stories of women drawn into the politics of reform that the impact of repression can be exposed.

The position of women in society and the ways in which their experiences are constituted within the broader field of patriarchal power relations underpins this analysis (Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1997; Yates, 1993, 2008). Critically reading educational reform text from this perspective disrupts the silence surrounding women's work and exposes assumptions and practices deserving greater scrutiny. The work of Nancy Fraser, committed to structural-institutional critique (2008, p. 11), furthers the investigation of the nature of injustice. Fraser's belief is that injustice stems from political, economic and cultural factors and that a three dimensional theory of justice incorporating the political dimension of representation, the economic dimension of distribution, and the cultural dimension of recognition (2008, p. 15) provides the best frame for analysing injustice.

The notion of 'emotion work' is described by Hochschild (1979, p. 563) as a gesture in a social exchange that occurs when an individual's feelings do not fit the situation. Hochschild (1979, pp. 569-570) explains that feelings become commoditized in work dependent on the capacity to manage meaning and that women from the middle class are more likely to find themselves in jobs with low financial rewards and little authority, but requiring a high degree of emotion and display management. Historically, the association of emotion with the individual through the relegation of women and emotions to the private and caring sphere of the home has made theorising emotion challenging. Boler (1999, p. 6) argues that feminist theories dispel such beliefs; and that emotions reflect linguistically embedded cultural values. Under such conditions it is essential to question the place and worth of women's contribution to educational reform, to challenge contexts requiring women to silently bear burdens

associated with reform and to explore the potential of emotion to act as an indicator of effectiveness.

To refine analysis, research data has been categorised as follows:

- Discourses of production: senior bureaucrats and academics responsible for designing and enabling the reform
- Discourses of circulation: producers of the resources
- Discourses of reception: school based personnel.

An educational context for change

From 1998 - 2000, Terry Moran was the Director General of Education in Queensland. Convinced that radical intervention was needed in order to raise education in Queensland to a world class standard, Moran invited Professor Allan Luke from the University of Queensland to take up the position of Deputy- Director General of Education. Luke, as a member of the New London Group, held a vision for school reform that was premised on the belief that the fundamental purpose of education was to ensure that all students were able to benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community and economic life (1996, p. 60). Luke was an initiator of the rich tasks curriculum, *New Basics*; and in collaboration with Peter Freebody, the architect of *Literate Futures*. This work was supported by Anna Bligh who, in February 2001, became Queensland's first woman Minister for Education.

Literate Futures was one of the first reforms of the new millennium in Queensland. In order to tap into the projected economic benefits promised by globalisation and rising neoliberalism the state government developed a vision for education, *QSE-2010 A Future Strategy* (Queensland Government, 1999), that sought to improve student learning outcomes and the management of schools. In conjunction with this and to prepare students for the predicted changes to their future work, civic and private lives, *Literate Futures* promoted a new definition of literacy incorporating multiliteracies into school practice. *Literate Futures* required educators to make an ideological shift from a predominantly cognitive –

behaviourist approach to the teaching of reading to a socio-cultural understanding of learning to read.

At the time of its implementation *Literate Futures* was an exciting reform that addressed identified needs, offered a process for change and drew on literacy and school reform research. Apart from the work of Luke and Freebody, the resources drew heavily upon significant Australian and international educational research conducted by academics including Barbara Comber, Pat Thomson, Carolyn Baker and Gunter Kress. It was informed by social theorists such as Bakhtin, Bourdieu and Bernstein. The socio-cultural model acknowledged the authenticity of literacy practices encountered by children from a diversity of backgrounds and communities and challenged the privileging of ‘school literacies’ that were seen to disadvantage children from already impoverished backgrounds. *Literate Futures* promoted the view that ‘best practice’ was to be found in our schools and that the way forward required competent teachers to share their practice with others. To facilitate this, up to 40 Literacy and Education (LEAP) sites were to be established across the state. Eventually 21 Learning and Development Centres (LDCs) were established. The potential of *Literate Futures* is evident in the following comment from an interstate female academic:

The thing that really impressed me at that time was the vision that the Queensland government had ... The Literate Futures document was a really powerful document, a terrific springboard. And the State of Queensland had an opportunity to really put something in place that would be revolutionary; revolutionary for its time, revolutionary for the State of Queensland. But this was certainly in my view, beyond what any other state in this country had even thought about, let alone tried to accomplish. It was based in good hard evidence from the classrooms ..., the productive pedagogies work, ... these Learning and Development Centres ... to create centres that actually reflected the local context and community of the school ... I thought that just really up in keeping with all the current research ...

To succeed, *Literate Futures* required informed collaborative leadership capable of analysing and advancing school practices and beliefs. For schools serving disadvantaged communities, identifying and addressing the institutional inequalities that were embedded in the traditional culture of schooling was a huge task. Even though *Literate Futures* had been theoretically well conceived the implementation process was fraught with problems; time was a significant factor. The political need for reform to happen within a three year cycle could not be matched by schools. There were delays with the production of the resources, secondary schools were resistant; and many schools could not access an LDC. As major providers of professional learning, the LDCs were expected to become self-funding within the three year period.

Literate Futures was initially planned to run from 2001 to 2003; but because of delays, the timeline was extended to 2004. In 2005 the LDCs were closed without many of the recommendations ever being addressed. The only remaining LDC serves the central Queensland mining communities and that is as a result of funding from the mining company. In hindsight, it is evident that, although the reform was theoretically informed and soundly structured, other factors had significant impact.

At the **level of production** the work was dominated by men. Professors Allan Luke and Peter Freebody undertook the initial inquiry and the writing of the *Report of the Literacy Review for Queensland State Schools* (Department of Education, 2000). The design of the reform was principally the work of Allan Luke. At the time Luke was aware of the limitations of government, commenting, “... *we face very conservative and immobile bureaucracies and administrators, and schools and universities that tend towards inertia*” (Luke, 2001, p. 3). However, because of the momentum for reform established through government action, Luke praised Queensland’s foresightedness and the substance of the Education 2010 documentation.

Within the education bureaucracy an androcentric power structure quickly evolved in response to the allocation of funding to address the literacy crisis. Drawing on Connell’s work (1987), Blackmore argues that this bureaucratic response had precedence in the long tradition of a ‘gender regime’ where the state defines women as dependent, and through the process of bureaucratization which is ‘a tight fusion of the structure of power and the gender division of labour’ (1993, p. 29) issues relating to women (or gender) are hidden in the bowels of the Department (Lingard, 1995, p. 137). This explains why, when literacy became an issue of national significance, masculine leadership emerged. The ‘wet and soft approach associated with the education of girls and young children’ needed to be replaced with ‘the dry and hard approach of the economic rationalists and corporate managerialists’ (Lingard, 1995, pp. 139-140).

At the **level of circulation** the material prepared was sourced, written and/or filmed by women managed from within the bureaucracy. The challenging intellectual work of sifting through research publications to develop resources for teacher professional learning and classroom practice required sophisticated understanding of theoretical and ideological approaches to learning and teaching. Luke’s foregrounding of a socio-cultural approach to the

teaching of reading required a shift from practices that situated failure to succeed as a reader as a problem with the child, to failure as an issue of pedagogy. The conceptualising of the practice to inform the development of documents to support teachers make this shift was not easy. The first group of women leaders responsible for writing the reading resources were unable to meet the demand and a second group, led by a female academic, took responsibility for the writing of the documents. The angst associated with this work was made evident many times. As the female academic leading the writing explained:

*...but these guys were the people who were putting all that together and we would meet and we would talk it all through and then we'd take the next lot of material forward. Each time we took it forward it had to go through the Steering Group [who] met once a month. We had three months in which to achieve this. We were **never** allowed to move forward on stuff unless it was approved... I found the way in which that stopped stuff going forward, given the timelines we were given to work with, was just ridiculous. ... The worst was the first Steering Committee we went to with the document showing how we worked out where it would go, what the framing was. One person who was quite influential, ... told me that it wasn't appropriate because it wasn't written in the appropriate language. I didn't use the buzz words. I didn't use the right buzzwords. But I didn't actually know what the buzz words were. He was on the Steering Committee and had such influence that basically if it didn't have 'those words' it didn't go any further. So ... the young guy who was second in charge, actually got together with me afterwards and said to me, "Email it over to me."*

He massaged it, put in the appropriate kinds of words; we took it to the next meeting, it went through like that. It was the same document, but it had the right words. Jargon, yeah. ... We had ensured that all the Literate Futures jargon was in there. ... We worked. ... I can remember I'd be in there at 7:00 in the morning and leaving at 6:00 at night ... and we were working all the hours there were to meet their three months' deadline and constantly, the thing that held us up, was stuff wouldn't go through... wouldn't be approved at these meetings. You ... could go on with it, but you didn't know when you'd have to go back and undo the stuff you were doing. And we just went on. We had to.

The women involved in the development of resources worked under pressure of time and suffered feelings of inadequacy and frustration as described above. The lack of direction, the lack of power to take command and the lack of respect for professional knowledge took a toll. Women with significant knowledge and experience were made to feel vulnerable and powerless.

The Steering Committee, made up of male and female bureaucrats, held power over the writers more through bureaucratic process than deeper understanding of the potential of the reform to improve teacher competency and student data. Resistance to the reform came from within the bureaucracy itself. Poststructural critical theorists such as Foucault and Lyotard

argue that, because knowledge is always related to power, the absence of understanding results in a consensus approach to decision making. This is considered as ‘a hopeless vestige of modernism that actually elicits complicity with totalising regimes’ (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 45). In this way powerful individuals within the bureaucracy held sway over decision making. Hearn and Parkin (2001, p. 71) describe this behaviour as a form of workplace bullying that focuses on the work tasks, emphasising stress and loss of productivity and that is more subtly gendered. Problems arising from bureaucratic process were identified a number of times, and not only by women. A male academic responsible for the production of the reform felt that opposition resulted from ‘*conservative reactions to policy change in the media and some sectors of the community and among some school leaders, especially secondary principals. ... I know there were hostile elements at many levels in the EQ bureaucracy and elsewhere.*’ It was felt that better outcomes could have been achieved if the leadership were ‘*to have been more conscientious at holding EQ accountable for doing something decisive about it.*’

At the **level of reception** the work was carried out predominantly by women who were designated Learning and Development Centre co-ordinators. These women were frequently early years teachers or learning support teachers with deep understanding of the essential constrained skills for early reading (Paris, 2005). Because these teachers had a tradition of engagement with practices to improve reading outcomes and were used to working collaboratively through the moderation processes required at the Year 2 level, they were keenest to engage with *Literate Futures*. My interviews with specialist reading academics and consultants were overwhelmingly positive, capturing the passion and commitment of those who dedicate their careers to working with early years’ teachers and student teachers. A female academic commented:

And one of the really interesting things was that we saw people build and grow and get excited all over Queensland, from the LDC coordinators to the people that worked in with them, because it was implemented slightly differently in all the LDCs, to the schools that were within the satellite of the, the scope, of the LDCs. And you saw people come alive and change and career-wise, blossom; and their building self-esteem ... and passion about teaching. And the sad thing is that it hasn’t continued.

A respected female consultant commented:

I know LDCs were a major focus of Literate Futures, and if I remember correctly, schools that were in a cluster connected to an LDC participated in a lot of professional development

organised by the LDC co-ordinator or even run by the co-ordinator. Those schools not connected (to an LDC) though, many received a teacher copy of Literate Futures and had a half hour chat at a staff meeting and it seemed to me that was it. Many schools I visited, ... when I held up the red or blue book, they hadn't done anything with it.... Was the content too difficult or too long? They needed guidance to understand what it meant, you know, in their classrooms. A lot of administrators didn't have the expertise they needed, like even though as a whole reform it was great, ... but then the support doesn't continue, so then a big reform like that just falls away, doesn't it?

At the school level the roll out of outcomes-based curriculum and government initiatives was more than could be managed successfully without specialist support. Although school-based management had been adopted in the latter part of the twentieth century, principals had not received any guidance in the leadership of staff in learning and development activities of the magnitude required by *Literate Futures*. At the time many state schools were faced with challenges brought about by the pressure to maintain market share and growing numbers of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Many schools had neither the time nor the expertise to competently take up the *Literate Futures* reform as intended. The situation for schools serving students in disadvantaged communities was particularly difficult; and, with increasing numbers of women taking up principalships in schools, the problem became one for women (Blackmore, 1999). A female secondary school principal, familiar with challenging school contexts and without access to an LDC, explained:

I think it's an issue for secondary schools; I think Literate Futures frightened a lot of people because they just didn't have the knowledge base to be able to know what was required and I think for lots of people it's too hard. I just don't think people that are coming through now still get any grounding in literacy. So you're dumped in a situation where you have these really diverse groups of kids who can't read and can't comprehend and you know, if you've got two thirds of them in your class as some of ours are, that are below chronological age, I think it's easier just to pretend they're not there. So, in terms of the question; What did it mean to me, I don't think it meant much to me at the time at all, other than it was another thing that I was told I had to do. But in saying that, there wasn't a lot of accountability in terms of what I was required to do. And I think you know, you do what you think you can do, based on what you think you can ... you've got some knowledge base to manage and I certainly wasn't confident in my knowledge of literacy.

At the time many school principals were challenged by conflicting priorities that restricted their capacity to take risks and adopt change practices. The paradox was that the discourses surrounding good educational leadership stressed ambiguity, shared visions, bottom-up change and creativity; but self-management meant top-down, principal-led and managed change that encouraged compliance (Blackmore, 1999). Thus while leadership research

emphasised teaching, learning and people management; school-based management prized entrepreneurship, financial management and strong leadership. At the school level, the magnitude of the task of changing beliefs and practices was overwhelming. My experiences as an Education Adviser (Literacy) working closely with an LDC confirmed that most primary schools, given access to an LDC and with strong direction from their District Director, took steps to develop whole school literacy plans and engaged teachers in a range of professional learning opportunities. The capacity of the LDCs to target particular issues or year levels meant that teachers were also able to benefit from working closely with others from different schools across the district. Secondary schools were different, however.

Literate Futures was a reform requiring significant change in beliefs about children and learning, about education for work; and about teachers' professional learning and the strategic responsibility of each school to meet the educational demands of the community served. The appointment of Allan Luke to Deputy Director General of Education 1999-2000 and as Chief Educational Adviser to the Queensland Minister for Education until 2003 placed an academic in a position of power within the bureaucracy. But Luke had come from a different educational culture; not through the ranks of the education bureaucracy, and the agenda he was leading promoted a more feminine pedagogy (Boler, 1999). The enormity of the reform meant there were conflicting priorities and allegiances within the bureaucracy that resulted in uncertainty, frustration and conflict. Hard decisions had to be made. A member of the group of Australian women academics invited to critique the work commented:

I don't know what ever, ever became of that. And so, it was such a shame. That's how I put it. I don't really know the politics behind it. I don't really know. I know that we had this emergency breakfast meeting... and we had to say to him that we really don't think these guys are ever going to be able to get this done in the time you want them to and it's not because they haven't got the knowledge. You just keep changing. My view was you keep changing the ground from underneath them. You know, they just get going in one direction and you bring in people like us which changes the ground. I'm not sure that we did them any good at all. Personally I think we took away their self-confidence ... in lots of ways I felt that, while it might have been a good idea at the time because they were trying to quickly do something; I mean the deadline was fast coming up to fix the problem. But whether that was the right way about fixing the problem ...it's always complex

The final decision came from a senior public servant who held strong views on equity.

Research findings

Because of the time that had passed since implementation, interviews were both reflective and analytical. Although there were many examples of successes, feelings expressed regarding process were overwhelmingly negative, including alienation (*didn't know*), fear (*frightened, it's too hard*), anger (*you just keep changing ... you keep changing the ground underneath them ... you bring in people like us which changes the ground*) and despair (*we took away their self-confidence; can't read, can't comprehend*). Interviews, allowing participants to express frustration and feelings, provide a form of consciousness-raising. Boler (1999, p. 117) supports Ferguson's view that consciousness-raising is one of the only ways to get in touch with repressed feelings of alienation, fear, anger and despair that lie at the roots of the domination structures of racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism and that confronting the social conflicts and contradiction is a step towards taking action. Speaking out disrupts the ways in which women's experiences are discounted and dismissed.

At the level of circulation the political and professional voices of women were compromised by the power structures which thwarted their progress and denied them opportunities to speak out about process. Language games and fear of dismissal kept women working excessively long hours. How could they express their frustration? Reports of illness, stress and depression amongst the women sit alongside reports of masculine aggression and domination. According to Boler (1999, p. 12) women are prevented from expressing anger at injustice and their silence is interpreted as willing agreement to their subordination. The failure of women to express anger is socially constructed. Furthermore, the English language acts as a form of control for women; there are names for disagreeable or angry women e.g. harridan, bitch, shrew (Court, 1995, p. 151); but no comparable words to describe men who vent anger at women. There is a chill associated with this.

From her analysis of the ways in which the achievements of second-wave feminism have been undermined by neoliberalism, Fraser argues that the economic, cultural and political dimensions of gender injustice have become fragmented and conscripted into a new form of capitalism (2009, p. 98). Previous advances in equity, realised in states with strong welfare priorities, have been lost as globalisation shifts the focus to the market and competitive individualism. These factors, combined with declining unionism; affect women's work security. Fraser considers that second wave feminism succeeded in transforming cultural

beliefs about women and work, but failed to transform institutions, so inadvertently supported the social organisation of post-war capitalism. Boler (1999) is also critical of the ways in which the economic exploitation and ideology associated with globalisation have impacted on individuals and communities, arguing that resultant identity politics, power relations and fear have become features of modern life not conducive to sustaining communities. It would seem that the threat of economic decline as a result of globalisation initiated a response that positioned women as less powerful in the *Literate Futures* reform.

Why is gender significant in this context?

The process for improving teacher knowledge promoted by *Literate Futures* drew on practices associated with professional learning communities. The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) (Queensland Government, 2001), undertaken through the University of Queensland, led to Education Queensland identifying Intellectual Quality as a priority for schools and the recommendation to move towards professional learning communities as a way of improving teacher knowledge and practice (Seashore Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996). The approach affirmed trust and respect as essential to cultural change in schools (Fullan, 1998); and promoted shared leadership and cooperative structures such as action learning. Boler (1999, p. 118), drawing on Schniedewind (1981), describes these practices as ‘now familiar components of feminist pedagogy’.

It has become evident that the tensions associated with gender in this reform are at two levels. First, there is the positioning of women within the reform process itself, as previously discussed. Second, there is the conflict stemming from growing research evidence showing that the educational practices associated with feminist pedagogy are critical to improving outcomes for all students, but in particular students from disadvantaged backgrounds, through processes that focus on teacher learning in response to the needs of their students (Department of Education, Science, & Training, 2002). Elmore (2006, p. 211) argues that there is confusion between change and school improvement; that change does not necessarily bring about improvement, and that shifts in policy improve teaching and learning only if they are accompanied by systematic investments in the knowledge and skills of educators. *Literate Futures* acknowledged that the expertise required for improving Queensland’s data rested with good classroom practitioners and provided a process for that knowledge and practice to be shared and built upon.

Insights into women's subjectivities as provided by the opportunity to interview in this context, confirms that power in education in the twenty-first century remains a hegemonic construct, typically fitting Blackmore's observation that "educational theory and administrative practice have been dominated by men, who have acted as 'gatekeepers' in setting the standards, producing the social knowledge and decreeing what is significant, relevant and important in the light of their own experience" (1993, p. 27). Historically, mainstream organisational change theory has emphasised the intellectual to the detriment of the emotional dimensions of personal change (Blackmore, 2005, p. 197), resulting in the foregrounding of organisational reform and the denial of personal cost, which could be substantial. As my research uncovered, many of the emotions associated with this reform were not positive. In the time following, many who worked closely with *Literate Futures* changed their jobs and left Education Queensland, taking extensive and deep knowledge with them. It would seem that those involved at the level of production were the most able to gain some satisfaction from the successes acknowledged; distance themselves from the reform and quickly move on. This was not so for those at the levels of circulation and reception. The long term work was predominantly left to women.

The organisational reform acknowledged by Education Queensland through the *Literate Futures* initiative lists achievements that include promoting effective learning and development in new methodologies for engaging students in reading, supporting the development of whole-school literacy strategies through the 21 Learning and Development Centres (literacy) and developing and supporting district plans to assist schools implement whole school literacy strategies. Described in the formal, unemotional language of a government department, *Literate Futures* appears to be yet another successful government initiative, leading and supporting schools in an area of significant importance. However, the words of a key player in the design of *Literate Futures* tell another story:

We find that all through the school reform literature. I think that if we look at the school reform literature effectively, and we look at the work of Michal Fullan, Andy Hargreaves and also work that's been done at Stanford and others, what we begin to see is, and certainly of the work of Ben Levin, the Canadian deputy minister in Ontario; what we begin to see is lack of bureaucratic will, political distraction and bureaucratic incapacity, and bureaucratic blockage, and bureaucratic disinterest characterise all levels of educational reform ...

For those involved, this education reform was high stakes, political and emotional work; and the questions of how well it achieved its goals and at what cost, in terms of both monetary and human capital must be asked. The evidence suggests that the leadership from within the

bureaucracy was unable to sustain the reform. Without informed leadership at all levels, reform takes its toll as it trickles down through the department to the schools, to the teachers, to the community. Dedicated professionals, who took up the banner for equality and improved outcomes for all, were challenged by time, by conflicting messages and by the lack of support for their work. Even though the resources produced under the *Literate Futures* initiative provided teachers with background readings, teaching strategies and footage of effective practice, there was a leadership and management gap that prevented systematic and targeted implementation, particularly in secondary schools.

Contemplating the way forward ...

For any future literacy reform process to build professional expertise that values learners and respects teachers, it is essential that women contribute on an equal and fair basis. From her work on justice, Fraser (2008, p. 18) has identified misrepresentation as occurring when ‘political decisions deny some people the possibility of participating on a par with others in social interaction’. In this reform women were denied parity of political participation. Reflecting upon how the implementation of the reform could have been more effectively undertaken, a leading academic commented:

Also, recent projects have taught me that wider direct input is needed – e.g., an advisory group including special education advocates, early childhood specialist, AATE etc reps, with some responsibilities for considering drafts and advising.

A just and democratic society should accept no less when the futures of children and considerable public funds are involved. Likewise, we should expect that decisions are grounded in theoretically informed research. There are unanswered questions as to why the *Literate Futures* reform did not continue. Was it the bureaucracy? Was it school leadership? Was it teacher hostility or apathy? Or did the rising tide to neoliberalism contribute to a sense of unease in the government bureaucracy that led to the removal of funding for *Literate Futures*? Whilst there may have been subterfuge and ineptitude at the bureaucratic and school levels, and secondary teacher’ resistance to what was perceived to be increasing workloads, the failure of the bureaucratic structure to equally include those with the knowledge about reading, about educational reform and educational leadership ultimately diminished the impact of a revolutionary reform.

In summary, *Literate Futures* confirmed that women in education are denied leadership positions in significant reform. They continue to be the writers and implementers; the providers of emotion work. *Literate Futures* exposed both the negativity associated with emotion work and the positivity that derives from ongoing, high quality, collaborative professional learning; feminist pedagogies. Taking a proactive stand, Fraser (2008, p. 114) argues that transnational feminism is reconfiguring gender justice as a three dimensional problem in which redistribution, recognition and representation must be integrated in a balanced way and that any misframing that has occurred under neoliberalism must be addressed if gender justice is to be achieved. There is power in emotion; particularly when it is collectively identified and named. Boler (1999, p. 113) believes that the feminist practices of consciousness-raising and feminist pedagogy reclaim emotion out of the private sphere and put emotions on the political and public map. Emotions are not just sites of social control, but sites of political resistance. In the twenty-first century gender in education remains a significant political issue.

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