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Building literacy education: pasts, futures, and “the sum of effort”

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Introduction: What is *the future*?

In a famous remark about education, Antonio Gramsci pointed to the urgent need to understand schools through the lens of “an historical conception of the world that understands movement and change, and that appreciates the sum of effort and sacrifice which the present has cost the past, and which the future is costing the present” (Gramsci, 1971, p34). While ‘futuring’ has been an enthusiasm for literacy educators, even more so since the turn of the millennium, the serious costs to be borne now for present conditions to be maintained, and the even more dramatic cost of adapting to rapid changes in the communicational environment, are not notions that have been at the front of most speculations. In this paper, I argue that we need to develop ways of theorising the future explicitly. More specifically, a point here is to see the future of ‘literacy education’ as part of broader patterns of social and institutional futures, and to have a ‘moral analysis’ of the future. This amounts to a recognition that choices facing societies such as ours, even choices about the apparently technical matters of educating our youngsters to read and write, call for moral rationalities to do with equity and excellence, the relative status of the 200 or so languages spoken in Australia, and the affordances and limits of the technologies that are reshaping our educational, work, civil, and domestic lives.

A useful starting point for articulating issues that bear on the future of education is offered by Kress (2003) who presented four questions related to high-speed changes that should preoccupy educators:

- What are the economic structures and opportunities open to school-leavers in an information-driven economy?
- What are the forms and modalities of communication, and what might be the educational implications of a move away from the dominance of written language toward the use of images?
- What are the emerging social structures and relations of social power?
- What are the technologies of communication, in particular, what are the implications of a move away from the single dominance of paper-texts toward digital-screen-online-texts?

Clearly all of these have serious implications for literacy educators in view of the significance for their educational, work, civil, and domestic lives of the level and qualities of literacy education that schools offer young people. For over a decade commentators have continued to put in front of educators the changing conditions of work places in late-industrial societies such as Australia in an effort to have the basic organisational structures of curriculum (materials, pedagogies, and assessments) revisited (e.g. Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996). These revisitations are often disruptive activities, troubling the professional status of teachers and the community's trust in that professionalism, teachers' confidence in their practices and in their potentially conflicting accountabilities to students, parents, communities, and jurisdictions.

So literacy becomes a troublesome topic when we consider the future of the relationship between, on the one hand, the conventions of schooling and, on the other, life after and outside of school. Equally interesting, from the point of view of exploring pasts, futures, and the costs of transitions, is the future of schooling itself. Most deeply schooled people, such as me, generally carry on as if schools always were and always will be more or less as they are, and that one of the things that makes 'developing' countries 'developing' is that they are beginning to have more and more serious schooling. It is salutary to consider just how recent formal, mass schooling is and how potentially fragile it is. More specifically for our purposes, it is salutary to consider lessons from the history of literacy and literacy education, and the ways in which those lessons inform and detail the contradictions underpinning current

educational practices that have remained unresolved since the formalisation of schooling in the middle industrial period.

For example, one of the key lessons from history provided by Graff (2001) is that literacy development, for individuals and collectives, has taken multiple paths. In the less thoroughly schooled past, there was more of an understanding that people could become effective literate participants in society through many different means and at different rates, and an appreciation of those differences. The central place occupied by literacy in school-education has meant that schools' heavy reliance on age-grading essentially makes variations in the reading and writing performance of young people into serious problems for systems, schools, teachers, students, and families. Clearly the leveling, filtering and sorting functions of schooling can and do work directly against official rhetoric advocating equity. That we discuss literacy education as if we have forgotten that contradiction impacts on the lives of many students. It is a highly consequential instance of collective professional amnesia:

Missing from our common operational and legitimising myths and legacies ... is the informality and possibility of elementary and higher learning without the lock-step enforced march of age-grading and wholesale psychologies of human cognition and learning based on their simplistic presumptions ... for a great many persons, traditional alphabetic literacy of reading and sometimes writing was acquired in the widest variety of informal, as well as formal circumstances, and at a wide range of chronological ages ... at ages sometimes younger but far more commonly older than the limited span of childhood and early adolescence that came to be defined as the 'critical period'. Modernisation of schooling into mass systems rested in part on the denial of previously common courses or paths. (Graff, 2001, pp17–18)

Human beings have long learned skills such as literacy without schooling or in sites that might accompany schooling, such that some anthropologists refer quite specifically to 'school-literacy' to demarcate it from other daily activities (e.g. Street, 2005). In the modern minority world, literacy is linked inextricably with schooling, and many of the effects attributed to literacy learning have been shown to be in fact

effects of schooling (Scribner & Cole, 1981). So in considering the future of literacy we can consider the future of schooling and then wonder what it is over and above school-knowing that literacy education might have to offer.

The most considered and patiently developed models of the future of schooling have been provided by the Center for Educational Research and Innovation at the Organization for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD). The OECD has built up three categories encompassing a total of six scenarios for the global future of schools on the basis of trends in its member nations. These are:

1. Attempting to maintain the status quo

- Bureaucratic School Systems Continue

2. Diverse, dynamic schooling following deep reforms ('re-schooling')

- Schools as Focused Learning Organisations
- Schools as Core Social Centres

3. Pursuit of alternatives as systems disband/ disintegrate ('de-schooling')

- Extending the Market Model
- Learning Networks and the Network Society
- Teacher Exodus and System Meltdown

Some of the key features of each of these scenarios are noted here (the interested reader is referred to the OECD website, noted in the reference list, for a fuller discussion including an outline of the bases for these characteristics).

1. Try to maintain the status quo

- powerful bureaucratic systems will continue to operate, and continue to be resistant to deep change;
- schools will be knitted together into state/national systems governed by complex administrative arrangements;

- political and media commentaries will frequently be critical in tone about schools, teachers, and teacher education;
- there will be no major increases in overall funding for schools, and the continual extension of schools' duties further will stretch resources;
- the use of ICT's will continue to grow without changing schools' main organisational structures or operating principles;
- there will remain a distinct teacher corps, sometimes with the status of a civil service; and with strong unions/associations, but also with dubious or contested professional status.

2a. Reschooling #1: Schools as focussed learning organisations

- schools will be revitalised around a strong knowledge agenda, in a culture of high quality, experimentation, diversity, and innovation;
- new forms of evaluation and assessment will be developed and implemented;
- there will be strong links to the tertiary education sector;
- substantial investments will be made, especially in disadvantaged communities, to develop flexible, state-of-the-art facilities, in which ICT's feature extensively;
- equality of opportunity will be the norm, and will not be considered to be in conflict with 'quality' agenda;
- highly motivated teachers will work in favourable working conditions, with high levels of access to research and development;
- there will be high levels of professional development, group activities, networking, and mobility in and out of teaching.

2b. Reschooling #2: Schools as core social centres

- Schools will come to be seen as an effective bulwark against social and cultural fragmentation in society and the family;

- Curriculum will be strongly defined by collective and community tasks;
- Extensive shared responsibilities between schools and other community bodies, sources of expertise, and tertiary education will be in evidence;
- A wide range of organisational forms and settings will be in operation, with a strong emphasis on non-formal learning;
- There will be high esteem for teachers and schools;
- ICTs will be used extensively, especially for communication and networking;
- Schools will employ a core of high-status teaching professionals, with varied arrangements and conditions; but there will also be many others, ‘paraprofessionals’, around that core.

3a. Deschooling #1: Radical extension of the market model

- market features will be extended as governments encourage diversification and as they withdraw from much of their direct involvement, pushed by dissatisfaction among ‘strategic consumers’;
- many new providers will enter the learning market, with radical reforms in funding structures, incentives and regulation, so there will be diversity of provision, even though schools will survive;
- the notion of ‘choice’ will play a key role, choice for those buying educational services, and for those, such as employers, giving market value to different learning pathways;
- there will be a strong focus on cognitive outcomes, but possibly on ‘values’;
- indicators and accreditation arrangements will displace direct public monitoring and curriculum regulation (e.g. exams);

- innovation will abound as will painful transitions and inequalities;
- new learning professionals – public, private; full-time, part-time – will be created in the learning markets.

3b. Deschooling #2: Learning networks and the network society

- there will be such widespread dissatisfaction with schools that new possibilities for learning will lead to schools being abandoned;
- learner networks will form part of the broader ‘network society’;
- networks will be based on diverse parental, cultural, religious and community interests – some very local in character, others using distance and cross-border networking;
- small group, home schooling, and individualised arrangements will become widespread, and a substantial reduction of existing patterns of governance and accountability will be evident;
- there will be widespread exploitation of powerful, inexpensive ICTs;
- demarcations – between teacher and student, parent and teacher, education and community – will blur and break down, such that new learning professionals will emerge.

3c. Deschooling #3: teacher exodus and system meltdown

- a major crisis of teacher shortage will develop that proves highly resistant to conventional policy responses;
- crisis will be triggered by a rapidly ageing profession, exacerbated by low teacher morale and buoyant opportunities in more attractive graduate jobs;
- the large size of the teaching force will mean long lead times before policy measures show tangible results on overall teacher numbers;

- wide disparities will arise in the depth of the crisis associated with socio-geographic, as well as curriculum-subject, areas;
- different possible pathways will arise in response to ‘meltdown’ – a vicious circle of retrenchment and conflict or emergency strategies will spur radical innovation and change.

One of the considerable benefits of futures modeling such as that conducted by OECD is that we are led to keep in mind that schooling has numerous facets – organisational, economic, cultural, and technological. This can keep us from over-investing in single causes of change, imagining, for instance, that technological or curricular changes will of themselves produce changes in schools and that these changes will have only positive effects and only on teaching and learning. Vectors of change such as digital technologies operate on literacy learning and teaching but only within the context of other vectors, some of which hold in place aspects of schooling that may militate against the positive potentials of technological change. Warschauer makes this point in terms of the contradictions built into formal mass schooling from the start that have stayed with us 130 years after schools were made compulsory in Australia:

The future of learning is digital ... What constitutes learning in the 21st century will be contested terrain as our society strives towards post-industrial forms of knowledge acquisition and production without having yet overcome the educational contradictions and failings of the industrial age. (Warschauer, 2007, p41)

So what might be some of those ‘contradictions and failings’ that hold us back? We can begin with four that have direct implications for literacy education:

- Our definitions of literacy
- Our attitudes about ‘under-performing’ students, families and schools
- Our magical beliefs about technology and learning
- Our naïvetè about the allocation of responsibility for learning literacy.

These form the bases of the discussion that follows, and I briefly discuss each of them in terms of imagining the future. The most general expression of my point here is that literacy education needs to be discussed in terms of a moment in history in which the future of schooling – organised teaching and learning, formal and informal – is being pushed and pulled, imagined in radically different ways by different sectors and ideological interests in OECD-style countries, presenting us with very old challenges, often in completely new settings.

What is *literacy*?

Our definitions of a phenomenon set limits around our imagination and direct our research attention. Definitions of literacy have differed dramatically over the years, across the disciplines that have systematically addressed it, and in various policy statements. If the nature of literacy practices is changing – the material modes of production, the genres, the technologies of production and dissemination, the readerships, the sociocultural purposes, and so on – then we would expect these changes to be reflected in changing definitions and, more specifically, in the breadth and flexibility built into definitions in current use. A definition that I find useful, that takes account of changing conditions of production, use, and dissemination, and that, purely coincidentally, was co-authored by me, is the following:

Literacy is the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken language, print and multi-media. (Luke, Freebody & Land, 2000, p14)

This does not look like many other definitions in that it does not privilege psychological, sociological, linguistic or ideological approaches to literacy, but rather aims to invite attention from scholars and practitioners with interests and dispositions from all of those areas. This definition builds change, flexibility and repertoire into the core business of understanding literacy as the activities and materials coming under its purview are changed by and in turn themselves change other social, economic, cultural, and technological developments.

The term literacy is currently too tightly defined and too loosely used: definitions often narrow the focus to a knowledge of grapho-phonemic

correspondences, or extracting ‘meaning’ from print. At the same time the term is used to connote or even substitute for the efficacy of school systems, the cultural level of individuals or societies, employability, the capacity for logical thinking, or even the capacity for democratic engagement – indeed all the ‘literacy myths’ that Graff (2001) has explored so thoroughly. The concept of literacy has developed a celebrity and political life of its own (Freebody, 2005), taken to hint at dark, deep system problems and to justify radical and apparently counter-productive policy measures (e.g. as reported in Fuller and others, 2007).

What is *underperformance in literacy*?

One intriguing aspect of literacy achievement, however it has been assessed in recent decades, is its resolute correlation with demographics such as socio-economic status, gender, first-language status and ethnicity. Estimates vary over times and places, but the durability especially of SES and literacy has been striking, and what might and can be done about that is an interesting and consequential question to ask of the future. According to international comparisons, Australian students’ literacy achievement reflect ‘high-performing, low equity’ school systems (McGaw, 2007a), and they point to the need to explore more deeply our understandings and assumptions about the relationship between literacy and equity and the ways in which our assumptions about categories of students and their backgrounds continue to hinder our literacy efforts. For instance, Freebody, Forrest, & Gunn (2001) conducted an intensive interview study of the views of teachers who taught in schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. Among the conclusions were:

- i. SES is a highly ‘generative’ category: Teachers attach a rich set of attributions to the category ‘low SES’, including attributions about experiences, language, exposure to literacy, adequate parenting, and so on. A selection of statements from Year 1–3 teachers working in schools serving disadvantaged communities conveys something of this richness:

we're very acutely aware of the fact that we are servicing children, who do not experience what you could call mainstream life experiences. And as I said before, a lot of our kids come from refugee camps where they are deficient in

experiences in their mother tongue. We have to try to teach them literacy in English as well. We realise that many of them come from disadvantaged homes or least-advantaged homes that are pretty poor, that are ... do not have proper role models. That do not give children the experiences on which they can build, their own language and um literacy levels.

I had a third of the class were in families that had two adults within the home for starters and that was just two adults whether it be biological parents, step parents or just the latest relationship and a lot, I saw a lot of children who couldn't come to school just through the fact that they had been bashed, that they had been, that they were victims of alcoholism, that they were malnourished, shocking sort of scabies, lice, that sort of thing and I'm not meaning that that happens in every low socio-economic situation but I think the parents in the low socio-economic situation have so many pressures on them, or a single mum may have that or someone may have lost their job and you just, just all of these outside pressures that affect the parents, affect the children and then you have them coming to school so tired because they've been upset the night before.

Just because you're rich doesn't mean that you're going to have a child that's quite bright. But, they've got more access to resources at home, and the low socio-economic status means maybe if the parents haven't got ... they might not necessarily be well educated themselves, and they don't have the skills to know what to do with their kids when they're at that early age, when they're developing literacy skills.

- ii. Educators' understandings of literacy and SES often function to exonerate them from the SES-achievement cycle: the strong tendency among teachers in the early years in schools in low SES areas, along with many other categories of people, is to focus their descriptions of the students' difficulties on the home and the family as a learning environment. In this sense, many teachers characterise such families as 'failures'. The culture of the home life, as attributed to low SES families, is the source of the problems in literacy and thus sets the limits on what educators can come to see as possible for students in

these settings. The school seems to be left with few options, swimming, however valiantly, against the stream:

I think that puts a lot of pressure on them. And maybe because the parents aren't spending as much time with the children, that the kids get the feeling that maybe school isn't that important as, you know, 'cause mum and dad, or mum – whoever's there – dad, is not interested and they haven't checked my homework for the last three weeks. Well then they're not interested in school. Therefore school isn't important. That sort of mentality.

Children coming to school have a very low level of literacy on entry into primary school or pre-school even. They umm, things like: 'What's a book?' 'Never seen one' sort of thing which I found very hard to comprehend when I first got here. Umm and the parents ... the same way because of the fact that they failed, they don't value education, school as a institution of learning. They value it more as a institution of baby sitting. Well, it's convenient. They have to send their kids so why not? And umm, any days when they can't send their kids they're upset about the fact, but they, I think themselves they failed at school so to them school's not a place to go for a positive thing.

- iii. Material resources are often related to cultural and intellectual resources requisite for success in school. In societies such as ours, there are elaborate and well-understood procedures for automatically converting material disadvantage to educational disadvantage, among members of the culture generally, and among school teachers, many of whom, myself included, have come from families who regarded teaching as an aspiration, an attainable entrée into the middle, semi-professional class. Some of the key conversion procedures in this process involve literacy:

I suppose the money's not there to get them interested in books.

There isn't the money to be spent on what you would call a normal upbringing.

Some accounts are better developed, with a grounding in the absence of learning materials or skills. But much of it also, as in many of the statements above, and as developed more fully in Freebody, Forrest, & Gunn (2001), is about moral relations between classes, acted out as irresponsibility or a failure of 'values':

A lot of children in these classes are from low socio-economic families so that their background especially where literacy is concerned is very materially poor, so that they don't have the books, the reading material at home to give them a book awareness, or the fact that they needed school to begin their literacy development. A lot of the parents, well not a lot, no, some of the parents here are illiterate themselves, so that they don't have the skills to teach their children before they get here, how to read and how to write, or even make them aware that, umm, it is important that they learn reading and writing.

In an earlier report of these findings, we concluded:

we found classroom activities conducted in 'disadvantaged' schools to differ from those in the 'non-disadvantaged' school in our sample. What is perhaps even more striking is the richness and fine detail of these educators' accounts of the relationships between poverty and achievement. In the descriptions and explanations given by the educators interviewed for this study, poverty, as a group attribute, brings with it a complex and confidently drawn mosaic of associations to do with much more than material resources: A heavily-weighted baggage of moral, intellectual, social, physical, cultural, and motivational dispositions is readily attached to poor people. Educators, like all of us, are members of a classed society. (Freebody, Ludwig, & Gunn, 1995, p204, Vol. 2)

This deep-seated attachment of educational deficiencies is one of the legacies, to which Warschauer referred, of 19th and 20th century educational practice, organisation, and even policy that urgently needs to be made explicit and undone. One helpful heuristic point to begin with is this: Why do we not assume that, precisely because of their material disadvantages, and the particular forms of social fragmentation of experience that can sometimes accompany those disadvantages, children

form lower SES settings probably bring to school more cognitive capability and flexibility, more determined motivation to succeed, and more responsiveness to genuine offers of help from educated adults? Why do we not act on the premise that the century-old legacy of schooling's legitimization of social structure should lead us to an understanding of the practices of selective privileging, rather than to itemising, with evermore forensic precision, the deficient skills and dispositions of disadvantaged families?

There have, of course, been several systematic studies of how the conversion of material disadvantage into educational disadvantage, through differentially effective literacy teaching, can be disrupted. A good example is reported in Langer (2001), the results of a five-year longitudinal research study on 'beating the odds' in literacy learning. Briefly, Langer examined the literacy education work of 44 teachers, 88 classes, 2640 students, and 528 additional 'student informants' drawn from 25 schools asking the simple question: What features of instruction make a difference in student learning, as demonstrated in high-stakes reading and writing tests? Here is an (unreasonably) abridged summary of the features of schools that she found were 'beating the odds':

- They systematically used a range of instruction (so-called "teacher- and student-focused") rather than being dominated by one approach to literacy education; that is, they were focused on materials, strategies, and organised activities that seemed effective, rather than on debates about 'ideal-types' of literacy teaching and learning
- They undertook regular assessments that were explicitly integrated into ongoing goals, curriculum activities, and lessons structures, rather than stand-alone bouts of testing.
- They made overt, cumulative connections between knowledge and skills across multiple curriculum areas, termed by Langer "connectedness and continuity in learning", rather than hoping that the students would all figure that kind of horizontal continuity out for themselves.
- They engaged students in interactive learning to develop depth and complexity of understanding in literacy, rather than relying

heavily on students' working alone; there was lots of talk about literacy knowledge, texts, topics, and interpretations.

As the OECD futures scenarios indicate, a priority on equity in the distribution of precious communication skills such as literacy is in the balance as systems proactively evolve or hang on regardless. Langer's study and others like it (see Freebody, 2007) give optimism to teachers and policy-makers with respect to possibilities for literacy development. Importantly, Langer's conclusions also frame those possibilities in terms of literacy's connections to broader curriculum activities and its special role in strengthening both the vertical (across time) and horizontal (across subject domains) aspects of continuity in students' learning experiences in school.

What is *online literacy*?

Any discussion of future directions for literacy education would seem strangely incomplete without some mention of new technologies. While highly consequential demographic, cultural, and linguistic changes swirl around educators, it seems that it is technological changes that have snared the millennial 'new times' tag most comprehensively. Increasing its share of attention in literacy research, theory, and policy over the 40 years since Chall's landmark study of reading teaching have been the newer digital and online forms of reading and writing in and around school. In a substantial review of the research on the Internet and schooling over the period 1997–2003, Kuiper, Volman, and Terwel (2005), for instance, have drawn the following conclusions about 'future directions' for literacy and literacy research:

- Students often have difficulty locating relevant and useful information, and often lack skills in exploring websites, resulting in a focus on trying to find one answer to their question.
- Students rarely look at the reliability or authority of the information they locate and use.
- The vast amount of information on the web results in access to information, but skills to decipher, weigh up, analyse, and

compare that information with other sources is lacking in the research literature.

Students, in short, according to Kuiper and colleagues, are competent with, but not literate in online communications. Similarly, the particular demands presented by online work have not yet stimulated a body of systematic research that can offer teachers some guidance on what to do about the shortfalls established in this and comparable reviews. Notwithstanding the weight of history bearing on literacy researchers, it seems that here is a distinctive ‘future direction’ now directed at them, with a short timeframe on it, as digital and online work increases in schools.

Conclusions: Whose problem is *the future*?

In his 2007 Australia Day address, entitled “A different kind of hero”, given at Parliament House, Victoria, Glyn Davis, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, surprised his audience by singling out the heroism of teachers:

[they are] the unacknowledged legislators of every generation, unlikely candidates who get little recognition for their contribution ... people who find themselves regularly pilloried in public discussion, despite their importance in our Australian story ... next time a public speaker takes a cheap shot at school teachers, reflect for a moment on just how much our political system, our way of associating, our peaceful streets and national consensus about the norms of public life, are learned from teachers.

... pilloried in public discussions about literacy in particular. At a recent ‘summit’ on literacy education held in Hobart, I was pulled out of a presentation by Professor Barry McGaw (2007b) on the PISA results by a film crew from a commercial TV channel. They wanted to interview me about literacy. Professor McGaw had been spelling out the state-by-state analyses of Australian 15-year-old students in the 2000 and 2003 PISA studies. He showed how, in terms of statistically reliable differences, Australian students came in the second grouping. More particularly, he was in the process of indicating that Tasmanian students had in 2003 performed at a statistically equal level to Queensland and Victoria, as well as to Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway,

Switzerland, Japan, Poland and France, and had beaten the USA, Denmark, Iceland, Germany, and many other countries. Statistically, Tasmania was beaten by only four countries – New Zealand, Canada, Korea, and Finland. I walked from this straight in front of a TV camera and was asked: “So who is to blame for the disgraceful literacy levels among Tasmanian students?” I was good at school, so I reckoned I knew the ‘right answer’ to this, but I worked my way instead from McGaw’s findings, eliminating various potential culprits, and stepping gradually toward the kinds of interests the media had displayed in literacy, and the kinds of ‘facts’ they had installed in the public consciousness over the years on this matter. Eventually, in fact, I wound up, driven on partly by distemper, at the conclusion that “you – the media are responsible”.

This was the ‘wrong answer’. Also it was not a good conclusion, and the path leading to it was shaky at best from a purely logical point of view. There are, however, significant lessons for future directions in literacy education that can be drawn from encounters like this (which, needless to say, was never beamed out to Tasmania’s unsuspecting viewing public). One significant point concerns the need for a sharper understanding of how communities can and should discuss literacy education. The opposite of an educative society is a punitive society. Punitive societies dedicate effort to refining allocations of blame; educative societies dedicate effort to refining opportunities for supporting and improving learning.

A second lesson, comes from turning the question around and asking who might take responsibility for the strengths of Australian education. It is here that we see that literacy education is the responsibility of a community, a teaching force, a school staff, and individual teachers. Most discussions of ‘solutions’ and improvement are focused only on individual teachers, but students are influenced individually and collectively, they go through our schools moving from one teacher to another, and, therefore, there is a collective responsibility, shared by families, researchers, teacher educators, school leaders, teachers, policy-makers, curriculum developers, the media, and so on. There is, moreover, a responsibility to work hard to develop some more formal theoretical and practical continuity among these groups of people

around the question of literacy across the school years and across the school subjects. Activist Jean Anyon is unequivocal on this matter, and on its importance in the current political settings of countries such as ours:

education policy cannot remain closeted in schools, classrooms, and educational bureaucracies. It must join the world of communities, families, and students; it must advocate for them and emerge from their urgent realities. (Anyon 2005, p199)

Students in traditional ‘target equity groups’, along with their teachers, have most at stake in how whole-heartedly this collective approach to education can be implemented and sustained.

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