Redress

30 YEARS OF FEMINIST VOICES
CELEBRATING AND REFLECTING
The Association of Women Educators is a professional body, founded in 1983, committed to the full participation of women and girls in education.

The Association:
• works to eliminate all forms of discrimination in curriculum, in institutional practices and in policies;
• encourages and supports women so they can effectively pursue careers in education;
• responds to issues of concern for women both in education and the community;
• lobbies for further reforms and change generally to enhance the position of women in education and in society; and
• undertakes research projects to make a difference for girls’ education.

Membership of the Association of Women Educators is open to women who work in education and to women who are interested in the education of women and girls.

Redress welcomes contributions on all educational matters, including academic papers, reports on research, short articles, book reviews, letters to the editor, line drawings, cartoons and photographs, which are likely to interest women. Some issues of Redress are thematic in nature. Others cover a wide range of issues relevant to women and girls in education.

All written material should include an abstract (approximately 100 words) and a brief biographical note (approximately 100 words). A scanned photograph of the author should accompany each biographical note. Photographs and images of suitable quality for print reproduction should be presented in .bmp or .jpeg format. Articles should be between 200 and 3,000 words, and should be comprehensible to general readers. Academic papers should include a 200-word abstract. References in the text should appear as bracketed numbers only, with numbered references listed in full at the end of the article. Footnotes are not to be used.

All manuscripts are evaluated by the editors, and outside referees where appropriate. The editors reserve the right to edit copy accepted for publication.

Women actively involved in education as practitioners, administrators, academics or researchers, and women who have an interest in the education of women and girls are invited to forward material for publication to:

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Subscriptions
Members of AWE receive the journal as part of their membership. For others, subscriptions to Redress are $60 per year. Additional issues of Redress are available at $15 per copy.
Redress was first published in 1992, 30 years ago. I have just read the editorial that I wrote for that first edition and am bemused by the seemingly insightful revelation that women have a different worldview from men, and full contribution from both is essential to the future of our world in all its dimensions. Thirty years later this seems blindingly obvious, but we are not there yet.

The journal was started to help redress this balance, hence the name. In its 30-year history, Redress has presented a diverse and powerful collection of articles that explore the challenges that exist in Australia and beyond in relation to the full participation of women and girls in all facets of society.

Scholarship, deep thought, and reflection are all evident in the collection of articles across the editions. The publications combine to become a record of the progress and challenges that have been hallmarks of feminist advocacy over three decades.

Women who have been past editors or contributors were asked to nominate articles that have lingered in their memory. Each woman writes a short introduction to explain their choice and the full article is reproduced here. Several themes emerge when the selection of articles is looked at in its entirety.

Jenny Nayler and Maria Delaney both nominated articles that touched on perceptions of gender. Maria introduces What is your gender lens? from the #MeToo edition in 2019. The term ‘gender lens’ encourages us to look critically at how gender is constructed. This phrase is a powerful tool for exploring gender relations and stereotypes. Jenny writes a thoughtful introduction to Ruffling Feathers by Sherilyn Lennon in the 2014 edition, who challenged the highly visible examples of hegemonic masculinity that were evident in her hometown.

Gender as a barrier is the theme that threads lightly through three articles introduced by Lesley McFarlane. Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting: Issues and Recommendations by Kay Boulden in the 2016 edition documents ways to support the thousands of teenage women who become pregnant and disconnect from education. This cohort of young women has been a focus of AWE advocacy for many years as outlined in Lesley’s introduction. Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor: Gender and Career Aspirations, written by Carole Ford, was originally published in a 2011 edition. It examines gender stereotyping and women’s careers, especially as perceived by young children. Penny Spalding’s article in the 2021 edition Taking Control: 10 Tips Towards Economic Security for Women is a historical account of changes in women teachers’ working conditions and economic security over a very long period.

The confluence of gender and education is central to the work of AWE. Leone Daws article A Feminist Theory of Curriculum was published in the first edition of Redress in 1992. She looked at how curriculum reform, which was then on the national agenda, could benefit from applying a gender perspective. It is well worth reflecting on this article 30 years later. Jenny Nayler has chosen Redefining gender issues for the 21st century: Putting girls’ education back on the agenda written by Pam Gilbert in 2000, and also Teaching Boys: Developing classroom practices that work from the 2011 edition. Jenny provides thought-provoking introductions to both articles.

A diversity of topics that touch on education in Australia has been published in Redress over the three decades. Some of them are very relevant today. Kay Bishop introduces The Philosophical Exploration of Peace in a Year 4/5/6 Classroom by Liz Fynes, published in 2008, as well as The Inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Content in the Australian National Curriculum by Kevin Lowe and Tyson Yunkaporta, from the 2018 edition. Karen Dunwoodie's 2019 article on refugee education I Wish They Were All Like You examines the challenges facing new arrivals, while the issue of climate change is the focus of Angela Collier’s 2021 article The Sustainability Cross-Curriculum Priority.

The final thematic thread is women and
leadership. For most women, leadership is not about being out the front, making a lot of noise, and going hard. This is reflected in the choice of three articles. In the 2003 edition, Mary Goldsmith saluted Two Extraordinary Women, Maree Hedemann and Pam Gilbert, both of whom consistently pushed the boundaries and made others think about how to increase the participation of women and girls in society. In 2018, Karen Starr wrote about Analysing Definitions of Leadership in Education and Sue Wallace nominated her article because of the way the content still resonates with her as a Principal today. Finally, Debra Ollis has made an immeasurable contribution to the work of sexuality, consent, and respectful relationships education in Australia. In the 2019 edition, she reflected on her experiences in The Best and the Worst.

For most women, leadership is a quiet vocation. This is especially true of the small group of women who committed to the task of documenting the journey of feminism in education in this journal for 30 years. This retrospective edition is also a tribute to their leadership.

Marilyn Harvey
Inaugural Editor of Redress 1992

A feminist theory of curriculum
by Leonie Daws

Redefining gender issues for the 21st century: Putting girls’ education back on the agenda
by Pam Gilbert

Two extraordinary women
by Mary Goldsmith

The philosophical exploration of peace in a Year 4/5/6 classroom
by Liz Hynes

Teaching Boys: Developing classroom practices that work
by Amanda Keddie and Martin Mills

‘Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor’: Gender and career aspirations
by Carole Ford

Ruffling feathers: Challenging limiting representations of gender
by Sherilyn Lennon

Teenage pregnancy and parenting: Issues and recommendations
by Kay Boulden

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What we need now, says feminist educator Leonie Daws, is an adequate FEMINIST THEORY OF CURRICULUM

To add to and subtract from the patriarch’s calculations, or to start counting anew, that is the eternal feminist question.

(Tong 1989, p.134)

by LEONIE DAWS | December 1992, Vol. 1, No. 1

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum has always been at the heart of education. Those who mandate what is in a curriculum decide what knowledge is most prized and they influence the world views of those who are being educated. Leonie Daws’ article in the very first edition of Redress, thirty years ago, looked at how curriculum reform, which was then on the national agenda, could benefit from applying a gender perspective.

She acknowledged that the curriculum-making process itself was a complex one, but argued that identifying, and applying, a feminist theory of curriculum would provide a realistic and relevant learning experience that suited contemporary society.

Leonie flagged several key societal issues that must be addressed in any comprehensive reform of the Australian curriculum if it is to be gender inclusive and also tackle gender injustice and inequity.

Thirty years later, readers are encouraged to consider if these issues—the experience of gender, the politics of identity, and also the diversity of the female experience—have become embedded into the learning experiences that are available in their own educational context.

MARILYN HARVEY

Leonie Daws teaches in the School of Cultural and Policy Studies, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.

At the national level and within Queensland much of our effort to improve things for girls and women has been directed at reforming the curriculum. There are various versions of exactly what it is that the curriculum does that it should not be doing, or does not do which it should be doing, depending on which branch of feminism you are reading.

This paper highlights some of the key issues we need to think about in working out our own position on how the curriculum should be changed. It is based on a detailed analysis of feminist theories and curriculum theories, and is an attempt to set out some criteria for an adequate feminist theory of curriculum [8].

An analysis of feminist and curriculum theories suggests there are four major issues on which we need to have an informed opinion if we are to develop a comprehensive approach to reforming the curriculum.

First, we need a theory of the relationships between the social structures (structure) which have the effect of “keeping women in their place” and people, particularly women, as active agents able somehow to change those social structures (agency).

Second, we need to have an opinion on the nature and importance of male-female differences.

Third, we need to acknowledge and have some views on how to respond to the diversity of experiences among women.

Finally, we need some insights into how and where important decisions are made about the curriculum so that we know where to direct our energies. I will take up each of these issues
in turn, looking at what the issue is about, and at how current theories suggest we might respond.

Acker (1987, p. 432) asks: “Should women be seen as immobilised by reproductive structures, by tradition-bound institutions, by discrimination, by men? Or are they active agents, struggling to control and change their lives?” If we are to be effective in bringing about change we must at times answer “yes” to both these questions, although this seems contradictory. Gaskell and McLaren (1987, p. 397) capture the contradiction nicely:

Women are at the same time active agents struggling to control and change their lives and constrained subjects shaped by social, cultural and economic structures. Women make choices, but the choices available are not of their own making. They become mothers, teachers, child-care providers or whatever not merely because of their biology or socialisation, but because, within the given social context, it makes sense to do so.

We move back and forth between this sense of ourselves as living lives shaped by the social structures and practices of our society, and as autonomous individuals who can make important changes in our lives. As well as recognising this, we have to understand the role which power plays. This refers particularly to the inequalities of power in existing gender relationships, where men exercise power over women institutionally and personally.

However, an adequate theory of structure and agency must also acknowledge that an interconnected set of power bases exists. This includes how sexuality is constructed, how social differences such as race and ethnicity are ranked, how the economy is structured and how reproduction is organised [13, p. 182].

Successful change in one set of relationships depends upon simultaneously effecting change in one or more of the other power bases.

As well as providing an understanding of the role of power, an adequate theory must give us insights into the possibility of transformation or change. This requires insight into, and emphasis upon, the role of women as active agents in the construction and reconstruction of gender [9, pp. 111-112].

Applying this to curriculum, we need a view which makes it conceivable that individual and group actions may influence the direction of curriculum policy towards a position more likely to result in greater gender justice or equality.

This points to the necessity of identifying appropriate “sites and agencies” as a basis for developing effective strategies for change. In the past we have tended to see policy as something fixed, determined by some usually faceless others, limiting what we can do. Seeing policy instead as a form of social practice, operating at a variety of levels including teacher-parent encounters, school meetings, teacher union meetings and bureaucratic arenas, extends our vision of the opportunities for change (Fulcher 1989, pp. 15-16). It becomes possible to see that schooling can provide some new foundations for social life if we can change what is valued in the curriculum. It also becomes possible to see that each of us can influence policy at some level, from what is decided in national and state forums, through to how we interpret and act on policies in our schools and classrooms.

**Difference: male and female**

Resolving the dilemma of the essential or socially constructed nature of male-female differences is central to developing a vision of gender justice and gender equity. At one end of the scale, ultra-conservative and ultra-radical views hold that men and women are “naturally” different and that existing gender relationships are either appropriate (conservative), or need to be turned upside down to give value to female characteristics (radical).

At the other end of the scale is the post-structuralist view that gender is socially constructed and that the solution lies in doing away with gender as a social category [5, 6]. Resolving this dilemma is central in the debates about gender justice and gender equity as curriculum goals, and particularly about the nature of gender-inclusive curriculum.

At a broad level, the problem of difference is a political problem of “how to safeguard as much difference as women need from men” [13, p. 186] rather than treating femininity and masculinity as either unchanged or dispensable.
Ramazanoglu saw this as a problem of “how far the biological differences between women and men are socially significant”. We must effectively negotiate the knife edge between giving due weight to the experiences and histories of women on one side, and questioning both the past and the future uses of gender categories on the other side [4, p. 89]. In this context, Alcoff’s (1988, p. 283) idea of identity politics is worth consideration: “The idea here is that one’s identity is taken (and defined) as a political point of departure, as a motivation for action, and as a delineation of one’s politics.”

A subset of the issues arising out of the notion of male female difference is the dichotomy between the public and private dimensions of social life. Liberal feminism has emphasised gaining access to the public realm of activities that have traditionally been associated with men (Foster, 1991). In the past, the curriculum has primarily been concerned with preparing (male) students to take their place in the public realm. The hidden curriculum, and some low status subjects such as home economics, have served to direct girls back into the private realm of home and family.

Feminist theorists are challenging this dichotomy. The resolution of male-female difference must also address the relationship between public and private realms of social life.

Diversity of female experience

We need to challenge the “neuter, universal ‘generic human’ thesis [which] ... covers the West’s racism and androcentrism with a blindfold”[1, p. 288]. An identity-politics approach calls for further research into the subjective experience of gender, and particularly how that experience intersects with other experiences of sexuality, race, ethnicity and class.

We need a theory better equipped to handle the issue of diversity. We need a theory which uses the different standpoints to build common alliances through making their bases clear, and seeking the points at which their goals and strategies coincide (Gearhart 1983, Ramazanoglu 1989). Eisenstein (1991, pp. 111-112) suggests that this “can most fruitfully be explored by giving centrality to the accounts of experience of those who live at the intersections”.

While there is a body of literature that reflects on these issues in the light of American and English experience [12, 2, 16, 15, 13], work on this task has barely begun in Australia [10].

The curriculum context

Within the context of the broad feminist agenda outlined above, curriculum theories can serve to clarify the particular requirements of feminist theory when applied to curriculum policy. Skilbeck (1984), for example, has contributed insights into the “sites and agencies” which operate in the development of curriculum policy. Such theories offer a focus for considering issues of structure and agency.

The curriculum theories generally, however, tend to operate from inadequate analyses of the curriculum policy process. Some assume an uncritical role in supporting the state, and this blinds them to the complexities of the political process. The result is an oversimplified analysis which sees curriculum decision-making largely as a rational process which can be improved through the conscious application of principles of curriculum development.

Others have uncritically adopted a particular ideological stance that has rendered the theorists blind to alternative interpretations of the curriculum context and curriculum policy processes. While these theories are premised on an analysis of the operation of power, their focus on the liberal concepts of individual liberation or empowerment has resulted in a failure to incorporate feminist analyses, or to respond to issues identified by feminist theorising.

Within the curriculum context, an adequate feminist theory of curriculum must address the nature of knowledge. In the context of compulsory schooling, this entails addressing the question of what is important knowledge in contemporary society (Yates 1987c). It also entails asking who decides what is important knowledge, which is why it is important to identify curriculum policy “sites and agencies”.

This analysis of the requirements for an adequate feminist theory of curriculum suggests that it should address the issue of structure and agency, providing both a comprehensive analysis of the power bases inherent in existing structures, and of the avenues for change available through the agency of individuals and groups.
It should address the issue of male-female differences, providing the basis for developing a politics of identity. It should also address the issue of diversity of female experience.

A feminist theory of curriculum should draw on each of these understandings to elaborate a vision of gender justice or gender equity, and to clarify the nature of gender-inclusive curriculum. Finally, such a theory must provide an account of curriculum structures, and must identify the curriculum sites and agencies that are central to understanding curriculum as a vehicle for achieving gender justice of gender equity.

A stance on each of these issues is essential if we are to develop a comprehensive vision of gender justice and equity.

It will help to explain the ways in which curriculum contributes to maintaining unequal and unjust patterns of educational achievement and outcomes, and to elaborate the ways in which curriculum can serve as a vehicle for achieving gender justice and equity. Finally it is necessary so that we can develop a coherent and comprehensive approach to curriculum change.

References


REDEFINING GENDER ISSUES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: PUTTING GIRLS’ EDUCATION BACK ON THE AGENDA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS by PROFESSOR PAM GILBERT | December 2000, Vol. 9, No. 3

INTRODUCTION

‘Redefining gender issues for the 21st century: Putting girls’ education back on the agenda’ by Pam Gilbert was published in December 2000. The Association of Women Educators—and the broader educational community—owes a great debt to the late Pam Gilbert, former Professor of Education at James Cook University. Gilbert’s work on gender, schooling and literacy informed the thinking and practice of many teachers and researchers.

Writing in 2000, Gilbert proposed that attention to girls’ needs was required. Further, she reminded the reader that it was ‘dangerous’ to treat girls as an homogenous group or to consider all boys as a single group.

Gilbert argued that, “One of the first and most significant equity issues to address is the uneven and inequitable post-schooling pathways still available to girls and boys.” This issue is still relevant more than 20 years on. Gilbert cited research indicating that just under 20% of young males were ‘at risk’ of not transitioning successfully from education to work—with the rate for young females being almost 30% at risk.

Gilbert called for greater awareness and action given that gendered choices regarding subjects were still being made. Traditional subject selection equated to girls being under-represented in technology subjects. A study cited by the author indicated that women were not taking up their share of employment opportunities in technology fields.

It would be useful for today’s educators to consider Gilbert’s evidence-based conclusions to explain girls’ relative lack of engagement with technology subjects. Gilbert points out that girls’ economic futures after school are not as attractive as those of their male counterparts.

While considerable headway has been made in relation to girls’ engagement with technology, a myriad of other factors related to subject selection and post-school choices produces inequitable post-school outcomes for girls today in 2022.

What needs to be done—and what might your role in that be?

JENNY NAYLER
Girls’ education issues have hardly been mentioned over the past decade, and the clear assumption seems to be that girls are doing well out of the education system and the preparation it provides for post-school pathways. However there are still critical issues to confront in the education of girls, that have tended to be obscured in the ‘backlash’ politics that has typified some of the boys’ education debates [8].

This paper will redefine gender equity issues for the 21st century, by putting girls’ needs back into the educational equation. It will consider what might be regarded as particular educational issues facing groups of girls and young women in contemporary times—and what might be the role women educators could play in addressing these issues.

However the paper will also argue that, just as it is dangerous to treat ‘boys’ as a single group, so, too is it dangerous to think of ‘girls’ as if they were a single, homogeneous group. Girls do not all experience schooling in the same way, just as boys do not all experience schooling in the same way. Some girls—like some boys—are buffered by family and cultural privilege in ways that protect them and advantage them. Other girls, notably Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls, girls from low socio-economic backgrounds and rural girls, are much more likely to need particular educational support and intervention. For instance, while more girls than boys in total stay on at school, only 69% of girls from unskilled family backgrounds stay on to Year 12, compared with 89% of boys and 95% of girls from professional families [2, p. 55]. And rural girls and Indigenous girls are similarly poorly represented at school in the post-compulsory years.

The economics of curriculum choice

One of the first and most significant equity issues to address is the uneven and inequitable post-schooling pathways still available to girls and boys. National data make it very clear that most young women face a far less attractive economic future once they leave school, than do most young men. In a recent analysis of workplace trends in Australia, Curtain (1999) estimates that 28.3% of young adult females (compared with 19.1% of young adult males) are broadly ‘at risk’ of being unable to make a successful transition from education to work. And recent Australian data on young adults in the workforce [11], indicate that 13.8% of young women in their early 20s can expect not to be engaged in the labour force or in full-time education, compared with only 5% of young men.

We need to consider how decisions that are made at school—and experiences that girls have at school—contribute towards this post-schooling economic imbalance for various groups of girls. And curriculum choice is one of the first areas of decision-making that we need to consider. Girls—and boys—clearly make gendered choices when selecting their high school subjects, largely based upon their perceptions of ‘desirable’ subjects and imagined futures as men and as women. While boys predominate in higher level Mathematics, Physical Sciences, Technical Studies, Computer Studies and Physical Education in the upper secondary school in Australia, girls predominate in English, Humanities and Social Sciences, Biological Sciences, the Arts, LOTE, Home Sciences and Health Studies.

Girls face a particular disadvantage because of this curriculum choice—a disadvantage that is likely to have important limitations upon girls’ post-schooling lives in the future. As technology becomes more critically implicated in the structure of contemporary culture, and changes the shape of contemporary work and society, access to technology and competence with technology become of crucial importance. However girls’ entry to this new information society, and to information technology jobs and careers, is likely to be restricted.

Girls and Technology

In a recent report prepared for DETYA, Newmarch, Taylor-Steele and Cumpston (2000) claim that women are not taking their share of information technology (IT) and technology (T) jobs and are inadequately represented in the field. Newmarch et al. place women as only 20% of IT and T professionals—a figure comparable to that presented in a report on women’s access to IT employment in the USA [1]. As Newmarch et al. note:

Given that demand for people with IT and T skills has increased rapidly over the past decade as the IT and T industry grows and faces emerging skill shortages, the failure to attract women to the industry is of major concern. IT and T jobs represent a considerable chunk of advertised job vacancies.

[2000, p.1]
Girls’ enrolment in high school IT subjects similarly reflects this under-representation. Figures across Australian states vary, but Queensland data are relatively typical. In the core Queensland senior school technology subject—Information Processing and Technology—girls constitute 25% of the Year 11 enrolments and 27% of the Year 12 enrolments [5]. And this lack of interest in IT as a curriculum choice has, as can be demonstrated, important long-term effects in terms of career prospects and job opportunities, and in terms of access to an emerging information society.

However, girls’ lack of interest in choosing technology subjects in the senior secondary school should come as no surprise to educators. Research on girls’ interactions with technology has documented significant gender differences in female/male use of, and access to, technology. Girls lag behind boys, a recent major national study of Australian students’ computer use has documented [9]. This report notes, for instance, that boys have more ‘advanced skills’ than do girls—and that they are more confident about their ability to use computers.

Girls’ lack of engagement with technology and technology subjects at school is consistent with girls’ more general lack of engagement with computer culture, particularly electronic game culture. However, this lack of interest in electronic game culture is very understandable. Electronic game culture is clearly a male pursuit [3]. The AAUW Educational Foundation Commission on Technology, Gender and Teacher Education (2000), for instance, suggests that girls appear to have rejected the violence, redundancy and tedium of computer game culture, but suggests that girls’ views are actually very appropriate social views: that girls’ views of electronic game culture are in keeping with widely held social views about computer violence and the banality of many computer games. The Commission suggests that rather than try to encourage girls into existing computer culture, educators should be arguing for a change to computer culture in the ways that girls indicate.

The American Commission makes a series of recommendations about how this might happen—and how we might educate girls in the new computer age. The Commission suggests, for instance, that it is important to:

- rethink educational software and computer games;
- redefine computer literacy;
- change the public face of computing;
- prepare tech-savvy teachers.

The difficulty for many women educators, however, is that women’s computer confidence and competence do not support them well in achieving goals like these. Women suffer from many of the same problems that girls suffer from. The Australian ‘Real Time’ report notes that:

“There is a marked gender difference in teachers’ skill profiles. Women teachers, especially those over 50 and those in primary schools, are falling behind in both basic and advanced skills.”

[9, p. x]

And there is another obstacle to overcome. Acquiring IT skills does not come cheaply. As the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data on household use of information technology demonstrates, home Internet access directly correlates with household earnings. In 1999, less than 4% of Australian households with incomes below $14,001 had home Internet access, compared with 36% of households with incomes greater than $66,000 [4, p. 23]. Girls without family economic resources are unlikely to have reasonable computer hardware and software in their homes, and unlikely to be able to afford to enrol in private IT courses. As the ‘Real Time’ report documented, girls in rural areas, Indigenous girls and girls without family economic resources, had poor levels of technological competence.

Concluding remarks

Equity issues for the 21st century must embrace issues like these about technology—just as they must embrace curriculum narrowness and the limited post-school pathways that often result from such narrowness. Of course there are important issues to consider about boys—but a boys-versus-girls focus is entirely unproductive. The issues facing boys and the issues facing girls stem from social constructions of gender and of gender relations in Western society. Boys’ difficulties with schooling and particularly with literacy are closely linked to their understanding of ways to ‘do’ masculinity—to become a successful ‘man’. And girls’ narrow curriculum selection is linked in with their gendered perceptions of subjects and of what is appropriate for a girl to do. Girls perceive that Mathematics, hard Sciences and Information Technology
are ‘male’ domains—and media images of these subjects, as well as views often held by parents, guidance officers and teachers, need to be carefully scrutinised, to make sure that they are not discriminatory here.

And we need also to remember that young women and young men enter a dangerous workplace culture when they exit school. Thirty-two percent of non-student teenage jobs are casual in today's workplaces; and incomes for full-time teenage workers have declined by 6% in real terms over the past decade [7]. Students need a variety of 'new' skills and 'new' understandings to be well positioned to engage with work cultures like these; they need to be prepared with the knowledges and technologies of the future—not the past.

Equity issues for the 21st century need to take up these post-schooling difficulties and seriously consider how schools and education systems can improve students' opportunities as young adults. This means that as educators we need to be seriously concerned about the narrow ways in which girls choose within school curricula options—and particularly how they marginalise themselves from the new technological skills required for the 21st century. Girls' education issues need to go back on the educational agenda. And a study of how social constructs of gender and of gender relations impact upon girls' and young women's attitudes to subject choice, to work and to technology, must lie at the heart of such work.

References

Pam Gilbert’s death was devastating in so many ways. It was devastating for those committed to social justice in education; to the many teachers who benefitted from her mentoring, encouragement and support; to those working towards a more gender just society in the wider politics of the Australian community, and to those of us for whom she was also a life-time friend.

Pam believed in teaching: she believed that it was truly a noble profession, a special trust, a privilege to be able to work with young people, to assist them to name their experiences, to comprehend their own power, to act on their own, and others’ lives. She also believed in celebrating, and she believed in doing it seriously and with a full heart. Most times I saw Pam in recent years, one of her first actions was to bring out the champagne. She especially believed in celebrating the achievements of those whose work was making a difference, enhancing gender justice, and in celebrating each others’ courage and endurance.

So it is especially fitting that after 20 years of AWE enduring as an organisation, that her life be marked by the inauguration of a memorial award.

It is never possible in these circumstances to make assumptions about the intentions of those who are no longer with us to speak for themselves. However, when I was told who had been selected to receive this first award, I had confidence that Pam would have approved this choice, simply because we had so often discussed the work of this person—Maree Hedemann.

It has been my very good fortune to have worked alongside Maree for the last 10 years. She is one of the survivors in Education Queensland, and I can confidently say that to the extent that Education Queensland is able to rebuild a credible social justice program in the best traditions of public education, Maree will be at the heart of that activity and she will give heart to all the others involved. Whether such a program is “mainstreamed”, in the glib language of public sector management, or whether it is a purposeful, dedicated program, Maree will be at the epicentre of the developments that really matter to the future of students and school communities.

Not that she will be among those claiming leadership, or publicising advances as her own achievements. That is not her style. Her style is collaborative teamwork, a commitment to scholarly advice, respect for students and teachers. To the extent that Literate Futures provides a strategy to enable the voiceless to develop a voice, to enable a developing generation to understand their world critically, Maree will again be at the heart of it. To the extent that the role and responsibility of public sector education as the cornerstone of a socially just society continues to be enlivened in new contexts, Maree will be there.

Most of us here have experienced the finesse with which Maree networks, strengthens partnerships, builds alliances, generates positive directions out of despairing conversations. Having watched her do this daily in the policy-context, I can tell you that she is both relentless and courageous.

Building the relationships and networks to bring strategies alive is an art form, it is what underpins successful policy, and Maree’s ability to do this is awesome. She is able to face down opposition with respect, humour, intelligence, superb preparation, and sheer guts.

I believe that Maree is simply one of the most adept policy makers in the area of gender justice in Australia. This has not come without cost. Like Pam, Maree has faced huge tests in her personal life. Like Pam, she has come out strong.

Tonight we remember one warm, passionate, steadfast, intelligent advocate for gender justice: Professor Pam Gilbert. We also extend our respect and recognition to another, Maree Hedemann.
FROM MAREE HEDEMANN

It was a great honour to receive the *Inaugural Pam Gilbert Award for Gender Equity in Education* presented by Lyn Martinez at the AWE dinner. Both Pam and Lyn have been an inspiration to me in my gender equity work over the years.

Pam was at the cutting edge in literacy both nationally and internationally—not surprising given her dedication to social justice. She had a special ability to be able to touch the hearts and minds of educators wanting to make a difference. She changed forever the way literacy and gender relations were conceptualised in classrooms in Australia and beyond.

When I began work in the early 90s in Education Queensland’s Gender Equity Unit, I found myself surrounded by wonderful women who were passionate about their work. Lyn Martinez led a dynamic team whose commitment to social justice and to each other was outstanding.

It has been a privilege to work with women such as Louise Ireland, Kay Boulden, Janice Parker, Maree Parker, Barbara Henderson, Della Hart, Lorraine Dinsey, Eileen Thumpkin, Jenny Nayler and there were many others. Lyn Martinez inspired us all and supported us intellectually and personally.

Pam Gilbert was one of those academics along with others such as Leonie Daws, Sandra Taylor, Rob Gilbert, Nola Alloway, Bob Lingard, Pam Christie and Martin Mills who have supported us so generously over the years. She is greatly missed by all of us.

Pam Gilbert has left a rich legacy that I will continue to value and draw on every day in my work in education.
THE PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION OF PEACE IN A YEAR 4/5/6 CLASSROOM

by Liz Fynes | April 2008, Vol. 17, No. 1

INTRODUCTION

Drawing on her expertise in philosophy education, Liz explained how this approach engaged students and offered them a context for critical thinking and developing social, ethical and intellectual competencies in a real-world context. The current Australian curriculum describes such skills in the general capabilities: Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding; and explains that these play a significant role in equipping students for work and life in our increasingly complex world.

Liz’s paper continues to be a required reading for The University of Queensland’s Masters in Education students in the Teachers as leaders and innovators course, inspiring many to learn more about and apply philosophical approaches to their own practices.

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Liz has a Level Two Teacher Educator Certificate in philosophy and has extensive experience in the presentation of in-service programs on the teaching of philosophy in the classroom. She has completed a Master in Education at Griffith University focusing on philosophical inquiry with middle phase learners.

This article aims to provide teachers and educators with a theoretical overview of the Philosophy in Schools program and practical strategies with which to engage students in philosophical inquiry in the classroom. Discussion focuses on the philosophical exploration of the concept of peace with students in a Year 4/5/6 classroom at Buranda State School where philosophy underpins all curriculum from Prep through to Year 7. Examples of the students’ questions, comments and analogies have been included.

Buranda State School is a small inner-city primary school with a student population of approximately 220 and a predominantly multi-age structure. It is world renowned for its exceptionally successful implementation of the Philosophy in Schools program over the past 12 years for which it has won many awards. The school provides in-service training on the teaching of philosophy in the classroom, for teachers and educators in Queensland, other states of Australia and overseas.

The Philosophy in Schools program

The Philosophy in Schools program in Australia developed from the Philosophy for Children program created in the late 1960s by Professor Matthew Lipman who was then a Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University. Lipman was greatly influenced by the work of John Dewey, well known philosopher of education. Dewey held the view that learning to think is fundamental to the lives of all students, and schools should aim to encourage the students’ development of independent thought through the process of collaborative inquiry. He also believed that community is linked to democracy; thus educational programs and
pedagogy centering on the development of community would contribute to the growth of democracy. Dewey's views are reflected in the work of Lipman [3, 4, 7]. Matthew Lipman's inquiry-based model draws on philosophy as a vehicle to engage students in practice of inquiry, whereas Dewey's model was grounded in experimental science [3, p. 7].

Lipman's model was also influenced by the theoretical implications of the work of educational psychologist, Lev Vygotsky who is known for his theory called the zone of proximal development which is “defined by the difference between what a student can do unaided and what he or she can do with prompting or with scaffolding provided by an adult, or by more competent peers” (3, p. 10).

Vygotsky believed that social and intellectual development are linked to the internalisation of social interactions [5, 9]. Cam (1995) stated that a logical extension of this theory would be “to suggest that the basic features of critical and creative thought may become internalised in much the same way: that children who engage in social practices which are critical and creative come to internalise them” (p. 9).

Philosophy in the classroom
Students explore concepts and issues through a philosophical community of inquiry; an intellectually rigorous process that requires critical, creative and caring thinking. During the process students learn to ask open inquiry questions and collaboratively discuss issues of interest to them in a supportive learning environment where all views are listened to and respected. Topics are driven by the students’ questions and ideas. Students are required to listen and think, give reasons and seek clarification, use examples and counter-examples and challenge ideas respectfully. They reflect upon their own thinking and the thinking of others, thus developing the skills of metacognition. “The practice of philosophy becomes a method for learning, and therefore plays an integral role in the promotion of higher-order thinking and construction of knowledge” [5, p. 43]. The inquiry process fosters the students’ intrinsic desire to gain knowledge and assists them to become democratic citizens.

The role of the teacher
The teacher’s role during a community of inquiry is that of a facilitator. It is important for the teacher to ensure that the discussion is structured, intellectually rigorous and purposeful. This is done by modeling appropriate procedures, identifying fallacious reasoning, pointing out the moves being made during the discussion and asking substantive questions to probe for further depth of understanding. The teacher’s role does not include sharing their own opinions or providing the students with answers. Constructive moves by the teacher will greatly enhance the depth of the inquiry.

The inquiry process
During the process the students and teacher sit in a circle on the floor or on chairs without desks so that all members of the learning community can see and respond to each
other without barriers to prevent open dialogue. Topics are explored through community of inquiry and skills are further developed through additional explicit teaching sessions.

The community of inquiry has three main elements; the procedural which is the way in which the topic is being discussed, the substantive which is the topic under discussion and the intellectual or reasoning element. In order for effective philosophical inquiry to take place there needs to be a balance of each of these elements. Philosophy sessions usually progress for 45 minutes to an hour and at the end of each session students are asked to reflect upon the discussion in relation to each of the three elements.

The procedural element
In order to create an environment in which rigorous inquiry takes place, a learning community needs to be developed within the classroom. An effective learning community is one in which students support each other, work co-operatively and collaboratively and feel safe to share their views and construct new knowledge [1, p. 4]. At Buranda students observe the following protocols when engaging in philosophical inquiry:

• Listen to each other.
• Build on the ideas of others.
• Respect others and their views.
• There may be no single right answer.

To encourage implicit use of these protocols during the community of inquiry they would need to be explicitly unpacked in a consultative process with the students. This may be accomplished through the use of Y-charts or other exercises.

To ensure deep understanding, higher order thinking and intellectually rigorous dialogue, the skills of inquiry need to be taught explicitly and continually developed through effective teaching practice.

The substantive element
This is the content of the discussion. The depth and richness of the discussion will depend greatly upon the facilitation of the process and the development of the students’ thinking, reasoning and inquiry skills.

The intellectual element
This element is about using reasoned judgement to evaluate the validity and strength of suggestions or arguments and drawing logical conclusions. Students are encouraged to use hypothetical, inductive, deductive and analoguous reasoning. They are taught to identify fallacious reasoning and uncover assumptions.

Reflection
Reflection is an integral part of all philosophy sessions. It is fundamental to the development of the students’ thinking processes and to that of the learning community. Reflecting on discussions as a learning community and individually will enhance the students’ metacognitive development and enable them to understand the inquiry moves needed to reach greater depth of understanding. Sentence starters are often used to provide a focus for reflection.

Philosophical exploration of the concept of peace
As part of a range of exhibits by the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA) for World Philosophy Day in October 2005, Year 4/5/6 Buranda students were invited to compile questions, comments and analogies on the concept of peace to be presented in the form of a Buranda Peace Train. A carriage template was provided and students placed each of their responses on an individual carriage, linked together as a train.

In order for the students to articulate their thinking and develop a shared conceptual understanding, several sessions were spent exploring the meaning of peace through philosophical communities of inquiry and skill development activities. Activities in the other key learning areas, such as English, SOSE and Art, aligned with, and built upon, the conceptual exploration undertaken during philosophy sessions. As this was the latter part of the year, the students had already formed a very effective learning community and were consolidating their use of reasoning and inquiry skills.

Commencement of the exploration
To support and extend procedural development the focus of the initial session was the protocol of respect for others and the skill of distinction making. This was discussed with the
students prior to commencement of activities. To commence our exploration and centre our thinking, the students were asked to think of a word that they associated with peace. Some examples were: silence, united, global, acceptance, happiness, contentment, understanding.

The students were then asked to pair with the person next to them in the circle to decide on a word that they believe to be the opposite of peace and give reasons for their choice. The words they decided upon were: violence, war, evil, conflict, discontent, disruption, chaos, irritation, hectic, disturbance, death and stealing.

The words were written onto cards and placed in the centre of the circle for all members of the community to read. In small groups the students then collaborated to identify connections between the words. They made several connections, justifying their thinking to the class and collaboratively discussing the ideas presented. One student challenged the word death as the opposite of peace. She believed death could often be a peaceful occurrence. This led to further discussion centered on agreement or disagreement of this view.

The students were then presented with the following quote by Franklin D. Roosevelt, past president of The United States of America:

“When peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries is in danger”.  
The pursuit of peace: Words from the wise, 2004

In small groups they were asked to think about its meaning and share their thoughts with the whole community. Some of the thoughts presented were:

- Smaller wars lead to world wars. (Year 5)
- If someone is involved in a fight or argument they could become stressed or angry and their anger affects others. (Year 5)
- It’s like a domino effect. (Year 6)

When asked to clarify the last point the student said “conflict between two people spills over and involves others and this keeps happening until there is a big conflict”. (Year 6)

Further discussion took place around these ideas. This discussion prompted the students to make connections between peace and one’s actions in preparation for further sessions.

To conclude the session the students were asked to reflect on the discussion as a class group and individually. The question starters used were:

- How did we go with our rule of respecting others and our skill of making distinctions today? (procedural)
- Did we move further ahead with our understanding of the concept of peace? (substantive)
- Did we give sound reasons? (intellectual)

Skill building activity

In a follow-up philosophy session the students explored the similarities and differences between the words violence and conflict to assist them to make distinctions between words that are similar in meaning and “might otherwise be treated as the same” [3, p. 19].

Consolidation and evaluation of ideas

On commencement of the next session earlier ideas and comments were reflected upon and the previously mentioned quotation by Franklin D Roosevelt was revisited as a lead-in to the following activity. The focus for this session was on providing alternative suggestions and counter-examples to encourage the students to consider, synthesise and evaluate different viewpoints. The following activity was adapted from ideas presented at a workshop held at the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA) conference in New Zealand, September 2005. The workshop was presented by Janette Poulton who was then the chair of FAPSA.

The students were put into small groups and asked to share a memory of a time when they had disrupted the peace of others. When they had shared their scenarios within a small group they selected one scenario and wrote it onto cardboard. Each group then shared their chosen scenario with the whole community. The chosen scenarios were:

- Arguing with a brother.
- Talking loudly and disturbing classmates who were trying to work.
• Accidentally setting an alarm clock to ring at 3am.
• Taking a sister’s toy without asking.
• Stepping on an ants’ nest.

Each group was asked to pass their scenario to the next group. The students, in their small groups were then asked to consider the scenario they had been given and decide whether they thought the intention of that action was to cause harm to others in some way. The students discussed this in small groups and then shared their thoughts with the whole community, evaluating ideas, providing alternative suggestions and counter-examples, and asking questions to probe for greater depth of conceptual understanding.

To conclude the session, prior to reflecting on their progress and thinking, the students formed small groups to come up with open inquiry questions that would probe for greater understanding of some of the ideas discussed. These questions would be used during a follow-up community of inquiry to build on and deepen their knowledge of the concept of peace.

Examples of the students’ questions were:
• Is it ever okay to disrupt peace in the lives of others? (Year 5)
• Can you feel peace on the inside when you are experiencing disturbance on the outside? (Year 5)
• Can peace in our minds help create peace around the world? (Year 6)
• Can we disturb peace by the way we think? (Year 6)
• Does peace equal harmony? (Year 4)
• Why don’t all people want world peace? (Year 4)
• Why do some people think that war will lead to peace? (Year 5)
• Can we ever achieve true peace? (Year 6)

These questions were explored during communities of
inquiry over the next few weeks and aligned with curriculum in other key learning areas. By this stage of the exploration the students were demonstrating insightful, reflective thinking and deep understanding, as evidenced by the following examples of their comments:

- To have peace people need to take care of their family and friends. (Year 6)
- Everyone has different ideas about what true peace is. There is no universal meaning. (Year 6)
- To understand what peace means to us we need to have experienced negative emotions in our lives. (Year 6)
- Small conflicts can turn into something too big to handle and end up affecting too many people. (Year 6)
- If life was always peaceful we may become bored and that could lead to conflict. (Year 5)
- Peace can be destroyed in a second but it can take much longer to make. (Year 5)
- Peace can be made or disturbed in many ways by many people. (Year 5)
- It is impossible to have true peace because everyone has different ideas. (Year 5)
- I think everyone should need peace because it gives you personal time to solve your problems. (Year 4)

The students’ substantive questioning during these sessions led to further exploration of related concepts such as conflict and violence.

Skill building activity
From as early as Year 3, students at Buranda are encouraged to use analogous reasoning to help them understand and describe a concept. Students develop analogies by connecting an intangible concept with a very different, tangible concept and justifying the connection they make. The analogy is strengthened by the validity of the underlying
To demonstrate the understanding gained in previous sessions and sharpen their analogous reasoning skills, the Year 4/5/6 students were asked to develop analogies for the concept of peace. Some examples of their analogies follow:

- Peace is like the grass because it is always spreading but there is room for it to spread further. (Year 4)
- Peace is like a pet because if you take care of it well it will have a better life. (Year 4)
- Peace is like a native plant. It tries to spread but there are things that try to stop it. (Year 6)

**Conclusion**

The conceptual exploration of peace through communities of inquiry and specific skill development exercises enabled the students to develop deeper knowledge of some of the global issues affecting their world today. The collaborative process of the community of inquiry enhanced their understanding of what it means to be a democratic citizen. Law (2006) states that “a healthy democracy needs to raise new citizens to think and judge independently. It needs to ensure they have the intellectual, social and emotional maturity to exercise their democratic responsibilities properly so that they are not easily psychologically manipulated” (p. 164). By teaching philosophy in our schools we are well on the way to ensuring this.

Philosophy rigorously challenges students to think, reason and reflect deeply. The use of metalanguage helps them articulate their thoughts and thinking processes. They learn to become open-minded, reasonable, and reflective, qualities that will benefit them throughout their lives. The skills taught during philosophy filter through all key learning areas and social behaviours.

**References**


TEACHING BOYS: DEVELOPING CLASSROOM PRACTICES THAT WORK

by AMANDA KEDDIE and MARTIN MILLS | April 2011, Vol. 20, No. 1

INTRODUCTION

Amanda Keddie’s (2011) article is a fitting companion piece to the article by Sherilyn Lennon referred to earlier. In Keddie’s own words what she and co-author, Martin Mills set out to do in their 2007 text, Teaching boys, was to try to ‘provide a detailed account of the work of teachers who are having success with boys in their classrooms’ (p. 26).

In the first section of the article, the preface of the text identified above, Keddie and Mills recount both ‘low-level’ and ‘more serious altercations’ (p. 24) and introduce their commitment to offer ‘teachers a framework for developing contextually driven and sustainable approaches to addressing issues of boys’ education’ (p. 26).

Keddie provides an outline of the teacher narratives included in the text that highlight teachers’ awareness of some of the ways in which concepts of masculinity operate in the classroom—along with other forms of identity—to impact on boys’ education. Both the teachers’ narratives and the authors’ commentaries, are designed to generate professional conversations about how best to address various aspects of boys’ education.

Keddie’s article reminds us that, ‘what teachers do in the classroom matters, and that their work can contribute to a more just and equitable world’ (p. 27).

How do you think masculinity operates in today’s classrooms to limit opportunities for the range of girls and the range of boys? What are the strategies that work for you in your context?

JENNY NAYLER

The following is the preface from a 2007 publication by Amanda Keddie and Martin Mills. Amanda is a Research Fellow within the Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Griffith University and Martin is a Professor of Education in the School of Education at The University of Queensland. Their book, Teaching boys: Developing classroom practices that work, is published by Allen & Unwin. The preface is reprinted here with permission from Allen & Unwin.

Following the preface, Amanda and Martin provide the reader with further insights into what this new publication offers.

PREFACE

Jason is an excessively fidgety 12-year old boy with a mischievous grin who insists on writing on his arms and gently stabbing himself with his pen. While his teacher is talking, he is consistently off-task, smirking and nudging Jeremy, the amused boy next to him. His teacher reprimands him a number of times, eventually separating him from Jeremy later during whole-class reading time so that he and his mate are sitting on the mat at least three metres apart. While momentarily sullen, Jason is not to be deterred—furtively glancing between the desired spot next to his friend and his teacher he surreptitiously inches his way back to sit beside Jeremy.

Adam, also 12, says he hates coming to school and would like to “get rid of all the teachers”. One game he plays to ‘outsmart’ his ‘high and mighty’ teachers involves skipping class. Instead of going to music class, Adam and his friend Tim sometimes hide in the school grounds for the duration of their music lesson, returning to their regular class group at the appropriate time. On one occasion, Adam smuggled 16 cans of Coke into school in his backpack (Coke is banned at his school). He and his friend Tim drank the whole 16 cans during
lunchtime and laughed at their teacher’s surprise when they needed to visit the toilet all afternoon to “wash their hands”.

In a Year 9 classroom, Ben is trying to get a laugh from his classmates. He extracts a rubber band from his backpack and attaches a thick felt pen to it, stretching the band back in a launch position. He skilfully aims the projectile at the roof but misses and hits the fan instead—the felt pen ricochets and hits another student. He muffs a swear word but laughs at the positive response from his classmates—his audience is delighted by his antics. Attempting to prevent further disruptions, his teacher moves him to sit beside a quiet girl named Prue—she is not impressed.

Three serial pranksters in the same Year 9 classroom, who regularly partake in a strange habit of ‘humping the air’ in unison and simulating sex behind girls’ backs to get a laugh, are colluding in a dare. One of the pranksters, Chris, dares his mate Josh: “I’ll give you a buck to pinch Kelly’s arse.” Josh—who, according to one girl, “hits on any female who is warm and vertical”—after accomplishing his task on this stunned girl, walks away casually, only the smirk on his face and his mates’ raucous laughter giving him away.

In a primary classroom, three small Year 1-2 boys are plotting an attack on their enemy Brian, an eight-year old from another class who, according to the boys, is a “fish-face dork” who “screams like a girl”. After the three of them ‘lay into’ Brian at recess, the chief instigator, Adam, brags to his peers about his feat: “I will give you a buck to pinch Kelly’s arse.” Adam, who is allergic to peanuts, is the victim of a bullying incident. As payback for an earlier altercation he has had with another boy, who is aware of Daniel’s sensitivity to peanuts, he is pelted and taunted with the remnants of a peanut butter sandwich. Moments later, Daniel suffers acute anaphylactic symptoms, is rushed to hospital and spends the next five hours in emergency before he is finally stabilised.

One does not need to go into many classrooms to observe the importance of addressing issues of masculinity in the education of boys. Common to all these stories is a version of dominant and subversive masculinity that is detrimental to the learning success of all students. The problematising of such ways of being a boy, we contend, is imperative to pursuing the goals of gender justice in schooling, and should be central to the teaching of boys. It is such teaching that we foreground in this book.

With these considerations in mind, the book offers teachers a framework for developing contextually driven and sustainable approaches to addressing issues of boys’ education. While we do not offer prescriptions for working with boys, Teaching boys provides practical suggestions and
associated professional development material that reflect our focus on pedagogies, critical reflection and gender justice. We realise that in addressing issues related to boys’ education there are no quick fixes, and that teachers and others working with boys in schools will need to be persistent in their attitude to the challenges they face while maintaining hope that change is possible. To these ends, the teacher stories provide stimulus for a series of professional development activities and discussion points which we hope will assist in the development of strategies that will address significant aspects of boys’ education in local contexts. While it is not intended to ‘solve’ all the issues involved in teaching boys, we hope this book promotes discussions about pedagogy and gender justice, and that it is useful in developing a practice of persistence and hope along the path towards gender equity.

More about this publication...
What we have tried to do in Teaching boys is to provide a detailed account of the work of teachers who are having success with boys in their classrooms. What we have found is that teachers who make a difference for boys do so within a framework that is concerned about the limited options open to boys; are concerned with the ways in which boys’ behaviours affect each other and girls; reject deficit models of boys through having high expectations of them, academically and socially; and acknowledge the ways in which gender is affected by matters of class, race and ethnicity.

A central premise of this book is that ‘privilege’ as it relates to gender has to be a key concern of the pedagogical decisions made in relation to the teaching of boys. However, at the same time, the ways in which some boys experience discrimination based upon factors such as race/ethnicity and sexuality, alongside some boys’ failure to live up to idealised forms of masculinity, and many boys’ experiences of powerlessness by being discriminated against because of their youth [7; 2; 8], have also to be considered. Our approach then is one that suggests both schools and classrooms, where they are not doing so, have to change to meet the needs of all students, including boys of various ethnicities, sexualities and physical abilities. Here we acknowledge that there are ways in which some boys are not served well by many aspects of the schooling process [see for example, 9; 10; 1; 12; 11].

With these considerations in mind, the book aims to provide a framework for developing practical, contextually driven and sustainable approaches to improving boys’ educational outcomes. To these ends, the four in-depth teacher stories and a variety of teacher voices from broader contexts we present in this book are intended to provide stimulus for a series of professional development activities and discussion points. This framework is structured in a way that we hope supports teachers to examine how the ‘personal theories’ underlying their actions in classrooms might be implicated in
either enabling or constraining boys’ (and also girls’) academic and social outcomes [5]. A key purpose of this book then is to assist teachers in moving beyond a narrow focus on boys’ educational strategies to a broader focus on pedagogies and critical reflective practice [4].

The teacher narratives
The four teacher narratives presented in the book are constructed from interviews and observations that sought to explore philosophies and practices in relation to teaching boys. Each teacher’s story highlights the key research-based understandings about gender, masculinity and schooling imperative in teachers critically reflecting on the nature of their strategies and their potential effects within a social (gender) justice framework [4; 6]. In Jennifer’s story: A fresh look at taken-for-granted ways of being we explore how her respectful approach and intellectually challenging classroom environment provides a highly productive context for pursuing gender justice. Jennifer teaches Years 11 and 12 in a large inner-city P-12 co-educational government school. We look at how she tries to broaden students’ understandings of masculinity and femininity through her resistance of traditional power-driven teacher-student relations and in her scaffolding of critical literacy. Jennifer’s gentle but consistent firm approach rejects the authoritarian relations that tend to perpetuate boys’ investments in dominating behaviours. While she positions all students in her class with agency and a voice, she is very clear about defining what behaviours might or might not reflect gender/social justice. A key strength in Jennifer’s practice is how she draws on visual and written texts to support students’ challenging of narrow gender constructions. The chapter highlights how she does this with texts such as the tragic play X-Stacy (written by a local playwright, of a girl who dies at a rave culture party), the television show, Arrested Development and the film The Crow.

Ross’s story: Afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted, highlights his challenging of inequitable relations of masculinity, class and culture. Ross teaches in a large, well-established, and prestigious boys’ Catholic school. In this chapter, we explore Ross’s understandings of masculinity as a hierarchical construction particularly as this relates to his challenging of students on a range of social issues. To these ends, we detail Ross’s attempts to transform the sense of elitism, materialism and Anglo-centrism, that he sees characterises the life-worlds of many of his students, through a critical pedagogy that promotes ‘thinking from another angle’. We bring to light how Ross promotes a recognition of the ‘missing voice’ through supporting his students in their field work with marginalised groups. In Ross’s story we also explore issues relating to boys and gender role models, and more specifically, to the ways in which particular types of role models can work to reinscribe but also disrupt traditional notions of gender.

The following chapter is Rachel’s story: Challenging ‘power-driven’ notions of being male. Rachel teaches in an edge-city government co-educational high school. Her story brings to life a passion for gender justice that drives a commitment to fighting against the gender stereotypes that she sees as constraining boys’ lifeworlds. We explore how Rachel’s behaviour management strategies, which draw heavily on William Glasser’s notions of Choice Theory and Quality World, and her classroom pedagogies, challenge and seek to broaden boys’ power-driven notions of being male. To these ends, we examine both Rachel’s one-on-one conciliatory approach with boys as well as her classroom practice. Elements of her unit entitled Boys’ Stuff, which explores with a group of boys understandings about what it means to be male, are detailed in this chapter. The unit is designed to facilitate boys’ critical reflection and questioning on how masculinity is socially constructed and policed within various contexts such as the school, the peer group, the family and the media. To these ends, Rachel supports the boys’ examination of important issues such as risk-taking and representations of males in the media, as well as the discriminatory practices of homophobia and sexism.

Monica’s story: Schooling children for life beyond school, is the final teacher narrative. Monica is a teaching principal in a remote primary government school situated in an economically depressed area. In this chapter we identify how accounting for specific social and cultural issues and factors of inequity relevant to a particular context is central in working for gender justice. We draw attention to how Monica does this in her present teaching situation, where the predominance of boys in her class and the broader gendered assumptions and understandings of the rural community, mean that she must focus on ensuring that girls in her class ‘can be heard’. Monica’s story also draws our attention to how broader social factors constrain her efforts to teach in socially just ways. In working against the grain of these factors, we explore how Monica attempts to broaden her students’ horizons and challenge limited notions of masculinity and femininity through teaching and about active citizenship within a context of enhanced community/school relationships. Along these lines, we illustrate how Monica’s unit Students Making it Happen at Warilda, which is designed to encourage student
awareness and their sense of responsibility towards caring for their health and their local environment, supports gender justice principles.

At the end of each of these teacher narratives we outline a series of activities, which draw on the teachers’ stories, to assist in the development of strategies to address various aspects of boys’ education in local contexts. These activities are not designed to ‘solve’ issues in teaching boys, but to promote discussions about the appropriateness of various ways of addressing issues of boys’ education. We hope that these activities will be useful for teachers both in terms of developing socially just classroom practices and in relation to the development of school structures that promote gender equity.

We conclude the book with a hope that the current moment of boys being constructed as victims is coming to a close. We are eager to see an approach to the education of all students that encourages them to engage with the world in ways that will make it a better place for all to live. Whilst, at times we are not overly optimistic about this eventuality, we do draw hope from the work that many teachers do with the students in their care. We have seen teachers in this, and other, research who make a difference to students’ lives. They are teachers who strive to ensure that their students’ opportunities are not limited by restrictive notions of gender, and that their students understand and challenge their own privilege, as well as having an understanding of their own rights. They are teachers who reject deficit models of students, they believe that all of their students can achieve, and they refuse to lower standards and expectations based on spurious notions of gender difference. These teachers also are concerned to ensure that the work undertaken in class has meaning for their students, being well aware that for many students, boys and girls alike, who are underachieving, are doing so because they see no relevance to schooling. These teachers make schooling meaningful. And most of all, and importantly for students in their classrooms, they care about their students. They create a classroom environment that scaffolds students’ learning, that encourages students to take risks and where being different is not perceived as a problem. We thus present the teacher narratives in this book based on the presumption that what teachers do in the classroom matters, and that their work can contribute to a more just and equitable world.

References
In a previous article in *Redress*, Carole outlined a project focusing on gender stereotypes in the career aspirations of primary school children [1] and their potential link to the sex-segregated labour market.

She continues the theme with this article adapted from an unpublished thesis [2], discussing some of the results of her research and the implications for educators working in primary education.

Carole has extensive experience as a practising early childhood teacher, and has a PhD in Women’s Studies and an MEd (Hons) [pending]. In what she loosely refers to as ‘retirement’, Carole maintains a strong commitment to education and community activism on issues related to women.

Any reader interested in more information about administering the checklist to their class/school, please contact Carole Ford at: caford@qld.chariot.net.au.
It seems that the sexual division of labour has a lengthy and intriguing history [3].

On Equal Pay Day, 1 September 2011, the Australian Government released a fact sheet through the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency to demonstrate the persistent nature of workplace inequities between women and men [4]. This includes an increasing discrepancy in the earnings of women and men in full-time employment: women earn 17.2% less nationally; 19.5% less in Queensland; and this expands to a 30% difference in some industry sectors. Estimates of superannuation fund accumulation profile that by 2019 women will have only accrued half the potential retirement benefits held by men, and are more than twice as likely to eke out their post retirement lives in poverty (ibid). Women continue to be concentrated in ‘people services’ (health-care, retail, education and training, and social services) which attract lower pay rates, and research suggests that “...simply being a woman accounts for 60% of the difference between men’s and women’s earnings” [5]. As Figure 1 illustrates [6], even extended years of education are no protection against income disadvantage for females.

Given the evidence, why do girls and women continue to pursue employment that apparently causes them disadvantage in the existing labour market?

Despite numerous changes in policy and legislation, issues of gender equity in the Australian education system and labour market remain a concern of the Australian public [7].

When McMahon and Carroll [8] suggested in 2001 that career development programs should begin at the primary school level, there was a flurry of incredulous discussion in the popular media, tentative support from some educators, and minimal interest from researchers. Consequently my project was framed very consciously to provoke interest, invite comment and re-energise the dialogue, not only about gendered career aspirations and workplaces but the generalised context of gender in education. In the past decade there has been a retreat from feminist discussion which places girls and women at the centre of theory and inquiry [9] caused by the moral dilemma of ‘the boy question’.

I would contend that educational concerns related to girls and boys frequently overlap, but where there is divergence

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Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor.
Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief.
Doctor, lawyer, Indian chief.

This well-known counting out rhyme, which has its origins in the fifteenth century, was unashamedly masculine in its emphasis. Lesser known is the accompanying rhyme for females:

Lady, baby, gypsy, queen.
Elephant, monkey, tangerine.

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![Image of a well-known counting out rhyme illustration](image_url)
the promotion of competitive stridency is unproductive [10].

Career development theory

The evolution of contemporary career development theory had its genesis in the first decades of the twentieth century, but the 1950s witnessed an intensified growth that has primarily focused on stages of vocational aspirations of ‘generic’ adolescents and adults [11]. Aspects of maturation and parental influence were recognised and in a few instances gender and culture added to the mix to create a link between self-identity and work identity [12]. Super [13] promoted the centrality of self-concept and suggested that internal variables (interests, talents and personality traits, for example) and external variables (including the labour market, the economy and hiring practices) are all implicated in career choice. What remained implicit was the focus on ‘white, middle-class, young men’ with an absence of detailed career development theory based on variables such as gender, age, racial/ethnic background and [dis]ability (ibid).

The prevalence of different occupational aspirations according to gender is linked to the persistence of stereotypical educational expectations from an extremely early age [14]. The disparity in attitudes to paid employment is evident in the messages, internalised by boys, of the centrality of work for males, when compared to the confused and conflicting perceptions young girls glean from the social environment [15]. While girls may articulate the probability that they will embrace some paid work, they indicate that this would be in conjunction with home duties and child-care (ibid). Whereas, it generally remains the responsibility of women to juggle the demands of paid and unpaid employment, the reality is that long-term employment will be as essential to the life of women as it is to men [16]. It is timely to emphasise that any generalisations about gender comparisons, or indeed other social phenomenon, should be considered in the context that there will be similarities and differences between the binary groups of female and male as well as within both groups [17].

The development of a gendered understanding of potential careers was explored by Susan Stroeher [18] through research in her kindergarten classroom. She conceded that the limited size of her project prevented universalising the outcomes, but there was compelling evidence that even young girls identified some work roles as gender-specific, and they overwhelmingly preferred ‘traditional, nurturing’ occupations. This issue had also been a focus of research by Lloyd and Duveen [19] who identified children at school-entrance age as invoking gender markers of objects and activities and embracing occupational stereotypes which aligned with adult perceptions, even to the extent that by 6-8 years of age they were discarding those careers seen as belonging to the opposite sex [15]. Within theories of career development there are differences in definition and concept, but overwhelmingly they support a notion of career aspirations where a gender dimension is salient [11].

The critical issue in considering underpinning theories of career aspirations is not whether gender constraints exist—the evidence appears fairly conclusive [20]. Though elements of contention may exist, what is substantially unexplored and unexplained is the recursive nature of influences from which this behaviour develops [13], and what interventions may contribute to changing children’s occupational aspirations: “…not only the what but the how…” [21].

Pre-schools and primary schools are well positioned to provide meaningful career education [22] as part of policy to expand children’s cognitive understanding of occupations and promote self-concept [12]. Even at elementary school level, girls are self-effacing regarding their lesser ability in maths, ITC and the sciences when compared to boys of the same age [23]. The construct of gender and internalisation of perceived ability—or lack of ability—is important in relation to curriculum differentiation, school subject choice, expectations of parents, school personnel and self [24] and these constructs are evident from an early age [17]. “Early career interventions provide the ideal venue for the promotion of social action initiatives aimed at improving academic achievement and expanding future career options for all students” [14]. Where primary schools did take the opportunity to include career-related education, particularly through incursions and excursions by people in varied work roles, children were motivated to think more about ‘future jobs’ and to be influenced by role models [20].

Tracking the changes in children’s knowledge and understanding of careers and career-related decisions highlights that career development is a lifelong process,
and one which begins in early childhood [25]. Pre-schoolers demonstrate a significant knowledge of gender-stereotyping of occupations and are reluctant to indicate an interest in cross-gender-type work roles [23]. In early childhood, girls and boys identify with adult role models, frequently the same-sex parent or carer, and gain a broad understanding that work is ‘something that grown-ups do’, and their gender expectations of careers are relatively inflexible [17]. As they reach the senior primary (elementary) years, one aspect of divergence is noticeable: girls demonstrate less rigidity about careers designated as male-only [25], while greater sex-typed choices are starkly evident for boys of the same age [21].

In the world of the corporate and consumerism, social status in the labour market and the rewards which accompany such status, are very determinedly gendered. Helvig [26] argues for the “inevitability of gender-role stereotyping” of occupations by young children through immersion in a gendered cultural environment, and suggests that the role of significant adults—parents, teachers, counsellors—is to expand children’s options. The contemporary world of work is increasingly flexible, and the concepts of work, career and education must be considered in the context of the social and economic milieu of transitory and precarious employment [27], rather than ‘a job for life’. While occupational segregation may result from girls and boys adhering to their perceptions of gendered work roles, there are no intrinsic elements of any job which make it inappropriate for either/or/both genders [28].

Changes in the youth labour market have been accompanied by extended school participation, especially for girls, but gendered outcomes persist although ameliorated by socio-economic status. Gender gap disadvantage which is minimal for girls at the highest socio-economic level widens as the student’s status declines [27]. Research suggests that girls’ career ambitions also decrease as they progress through the school system (ibid). What is often not effectively understood is that both the ‘bread-winner’ and the ‘housewife’ labels are historical, social constructs which do not accurately reflect the enormous change to the workplace in the past three decades [29].

Education is identified as crucial to addressing social and economic inequity, but the outcomes are dependent upon the participation of all sectors of society [30]. While education settings are too frequently involved in the perpetuation of gender inequities and stereotypes, “it can also be a crucial focus for changing them” [31]. This was relevant to the conjecture in the mid-1990s that early childhood settings had been relatively invisible in the gender debate [32], and yet the evidence indicates that the kindergarten, pre-school or child-care centre and the early years classroom provide educational experiences that are anything but equitable [33]. For children of all ages, educational settings are an important primary location for developing social relationships, and yet they are also a primary location for exclusion and inequity [34]. Unfortunately, in Australia the leadership teams in many schools may profess to be “supportive—sort of” of the implementation of gender reform without any substantial notion of “what is and isn’t happening in their schools” [35].

Addressing issues of gender equity—and gender inequity—may project some educators to a place outside their comfort zone: however, gender equity cannot legitimately be regarded as an ‘optional extra’ [36], a situation which continues to be evident in the mainstream education system [20].

Educational knowledge and curriculum and the language used in educational settings replicates the dominant or mainstream culture and educators are well positioned to provide a positive model for influencing and challenging sexism, both overt and covert, within their classroom or more widely through other areas of the school structure and programs. If teachers do establish the ground rules and have telling input into class discourse, then their responsibility to identify gender dualisms which endorse conventional perspectives of femininity and masculinity, and to ensure the utilisation of inclusive, gender-sensitive methods and materials, is enormous [37]. The first key to accepting such responsibilities is incumbent on recognising their existence [38].

Whether overt or covert the curricula are set up and supported by the school and provide messages about gender role development through activities, modelling, reinforcement and other forms of communication. Prevalent classroom practices perpetuate the stereotypes of inept and dependent females and the competent and active male hero. This mirrors gender stereotypes that exist throughout society and is part
of what is referred to as the hidden curriculum [39]. Adjacent to the hidden curriculum is what David Sadker [40] refers to as gender blindness: circumstances where the gender bias is so normative that it escapes scrutiny. Self-evaluation of the learning environment they provide has resulted in some teachers claiming that they inhabit a gender-free zone, but the ‘norms’, or normative assumptions which most early childhood and primary teachers have accumulated over their lifetime routinely escape scrutiny [41].

Research with children in a primary school setting detailed how, if given the opportunity, more than 40% of girls would prefer to be born a member of the opposite sex; yet this was the response from only 5% of boys [40]. Such a finding suggests that both genders have absorbed the prevailing climate in the classroom and beyond and have a functional understanding of ‘adult-validated sex-stereotyped beliefs’ [42]. Girls know who is winning the war!

Results from the research
The project included 58 children:
• Grade 1 – 10 girls and 10 boys;
• Grade 3/4 – 11 girls and 7 boys; and
• Grade 7 – 14 girls and 7 boys.

In assessing a list of 20 career options children were asked to consider the gender-appropriateness of each role by nominating careers as appropriate for:
• both women and men (B);
• men (M);

Figure 2: Aggregate of options nominated by all children (n=58) in the project
• women (W);
• don’t know (DK).

It was assumed that if children were not influenced by gender differences then the majority of career options would be identified as non-gendered or gender neutral: that is most children would label every career (or the majority of careers) as suitable for ‘both women and men’.

Figure 2 provides a pictorial representation of the raw data, and is an aggregate of girls and boys at all the Year levels (n=58). The blue shaded area in each column represents the number of children who identified a career option as gender-neutral: from a low of 6 for plumbing to a high of 47 for shop assistant. The extent to which children have viewed many of these options through a gender filter is readily evident. Where the gender-neutral option has not been chosen, which accounts for more than 45% of options, alternative choices have generally indicated that the role is seen as for women or for men. The roles seen as most gender-specific for women include hairdresser, nurse, model, librarian and kindergarten teacher, while men are nominated as plumbers, fire-fighters, pilots, prime ministers, principals and basket-ballers.

The data from this small-scale research project specifically relates to a limited cohort of students from one setting but the findings demonstrate some critical emerging themes. Consequently, while the results are not universally applicable, that is, their ‘generalisability’ is limited [43], they do provide contextual indicators and the potential for the project to be replicated. McMahon & Watson [44] identify the sparseness of recent research on young children’s career development and suggest that there has been “…an overemphasis on occupational aspirations and an under-emphasis on other critical aspects of children’s career development”.

While my research does acknowledge individual career aspirations, it is rather a critical view that links gender with careers to which children do not aspire. Identifying the negative appraisal of particular careers by both girls and boys may provide some clues to the occupational knowledge children need to make considered and relevant choices, themes that are pursued through individual interviews.

The participants’ responses at each year level confirmed that children are beginning to make observations about the world of work and their potential position in paid employment. They demonstrate awareness of why people have ‘jobs’ and some rudimentary concepts of career selection and pre-requisites. What they also clearly indicate is that gender dimensions are already directing and constraining their aspirations. The overwhelming indications from those research studies that have been conducted at the primary school level [32] emphasise that deferring learning about ‘work’ deprives children of valuable opportunities to gain greater insight into the pervasive nature of gender stereotypes and aspects of self-concept. Further, teachers and counsellors may lack the confidence and/or understanding of the relevance of implementing curriculum and classroom practices which promote and expand children’s existing framework of career development skills and knowledge [45]. The learning continuum in career development should be as essential and rigorous as other areas of children’s development learning. Most importantly it should be inclusive and challenge the prevailing discourse of gender stereotyping [46].

While the prevalence of literature on career planning and development highlights the importance of secondary education and post-secondary pathways, the focus of this research is most emphatically on children at the primary school level (ages 5-13). The very limited discussion on the career aspirations of children in this cohort [47] demonstrates, in clichéd terms, that career counselling for many girls at Year 9 and 10 levels, is probably passé. Lufkin [48] in a most comprehensive document outlining the limited nature of non-traditional career selection, highlights one root cause as a lack of early exposure ‘in elementary school’ to gender stereotyping. While the proposal for equitable workplace participation is more extensive than females diversifying into non-traditional work roles, the tenet persists: addressing gender stereotypes in career aspirations is most effective when it commences at the early stages of formulating work/gender schemas [49], that is, in early childhood.

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INTRODUCTION
Sherilyn Lennon, the author of *Ruffling feathers: Challenging limiting representations of gender* (2014), began her career as an English teacher and head of department in an isolated rural community. These professional positions led her to explore—and transform—limiting gender beliefs and practices.

A conversation with a male student about the need for a ‘pass’ in English led to Lennon’s realisation that poor school performance did not limit boys’ opportunities for local employment in Wheatville. Lennon notes that she ‘started to wonder what the social impact might be on a community where so many of its boys devalued schooling’ (p. 27).

Lennon’s article considers the discourses beyond school and how they:

…represent[ed] local males as powerful, physical, reckless, courageous, successful, and bonded to their teammates, families and male friends through activities such as football, cricket, golf and the consumption of alcohol. (p. 28)

The article includes an account of the author’s letter to the local paper in which she challenged the ‘Plucked Duck’ logo used by the local Bachelor and Spinster Ball Committee. She describes the cartoon which regularly appeared in promotional materials, including in the form of a banner across the main street as:

…a cartoon image of an aggressive looking male emu holding a can of beer and towering over a prostrate female emu who is sporting what appears to be a ‘just raped’ expression with legs askew, the words, ‘plucked duck’ emblazoned underneath her, and feathers flying. (p. 29)

Lennon’s letter generated numerous written responses and conversations. This English head of department ‘created spaces where hegemonic masculinity [could] be made visible and unsettled’ (p. 30). An extended study, including its ongoing impact, is outlined in her text, *Unsettling research: Using critical praxis and activism to create uncomfortable spaces* (2014, Peter Lang; available from www.peterlang.com).

The lived experience of hegemonic masculinity is, of course, not confined to this community or to the time of these events. We can learn so much from this article and the associated text—not the least of which is the value of praxis—the application of theoretical understandings to practice—and the need for activism.

How can these ideas support your actions to bring about much-needed change for gender justice?

JENNY NAYLER

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**THI** **S** **PA** **PE** **R** **DRAWS** **ON**, a larger body of work that sought to understand and transform limiting gender beliefs and practices in a Western Queensland community. Using critical praxis and activism, Sherilyn set out to make visible—and interrupt—toxic gender messages being broadcast by a revered local icon. The extended study, and its ongoing impact, is detailed in her newly released book (Lennon, 2015).

**Sherilyn Lennon** is a lecturer in the school of Educational and Professional Studies at Griffith University. She shares her life between the city and a sheep, wheat and cattle farm in Western Queensland.

Prior to her appointment at Griffith (in 2014) Sherilyn had spent 25 years living and working in an isolated rural community. She is passionate about issues relating to gender and education and the potential of transformative and activist pedagogies for initiating long-term social change.
Introducing the community, the educator and the issue

Wheatville1 was a rural community of nearly 11,000 residents. This figure included community members living in the town of Wheatville, those living on surrounding farms and those residing in smaller outlying settlements. The Wheatville shire sprawled across a massive 19,284 square kilometres encompassing some of Australia’s finest farming country. The town was the service centre for the community providing such things as education, entertainment, commerce and sporting facilities. Wheatville’s residents knew each other and one another’s family histories. Lives were dependent on, and interconnected by, the seasons. Here community members operated according to a strict but unwritten code of traditional values and beliefs.

I was posted to Wheatville as a newly graduated secondary English teacher by the State Education Department in 1985. On arrival, I shared a department house with three other young female teachers also new to town. I was 21, excited, passionate, enthusiastic, and naïve. I soon found that my expectation of what the teaching experience would be did not correlate with my lived experiences. I learned quickly the difficulties in keeping many of the male students in my classrooms engaged and on task. This I found extremely stressful. Many of the boys were highly motivated outside of school by activities such as football, hunting, motocross, or underage drinking, but they could not seem to muster the same enthusiasm for their studies. Hence, I spent countless sleepless nights in my first couple of years of teaching reliving the day’s events and wondering what I was doing wrong.

With experience I did get better at managing ‘the boys’, but I knew I was managing them—not really teaching them or engaging them authentically in the learning process. This bothered me, and I owned much of the blame for not being able to meet their needs. Then, about 10 years into my career, this thinking was interrupted during a conversation I had with a 15-year old student. At the time, I was head of the English department. One of my responsibilities was to ‘chase up’ students who had failed to submit their assessment pieces by the due date. I was admonishing a boy for not making adequate use of his class time—something I found particularly frustrating, as I knew the boy well enough to know that he was academically capable of better. From memory the conversation went something like this:

Me: So Michael, if you don’t complete this piece of assessment you won’t pass English. If you don’t pass English you can forget about any apprenticeships, a career in the defence force, or anything better than an unskilled laboring job. Is that really what you want? Is that really all you’re capable of?

Michael: Miss, you don’t know what you’re talking about.

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1 Pseudonyms are used for all names and places.
I’ve already got three jobs lined up: I’ve got the option of a boilermaking apprenticeship with my uncle; I can go cotton contracting with Dad; or I’ve been offered a motor mechanic’s apprenticeship at Robinson’s. I don’t need to pass English for any of them. I don’t need to pass anything for any of them!

His reply startled me. It was the first time I had ever considered that there might be a link between boys’ schooling performances and the ideological messages they receive and transmit in their broader cultural contexts [6]. It had taken me 10 long years of teaching in this community to realise that something which I prized so highly—a formal education—was, apparently, of such little value to so many of the community’s boys and their prospective employees. His blunt but honest response initiated in me the beginnings of a need to have a much deeper understanding of how gender beliefs and practices were impacting on students’ and community members’ lives in Wheatville. I started to wonder what the social impact might be on a community where so many of its boys devalued schooling.

Whilst I always believed that I could do better as a teacher, I began to consider that the issue of this community’s disengaged boys was far more complex than just the quality of its teachers or schools. This was a whole-of-community issue deeply entwined within the “structuring principles and ideas that mediate between the dominant society and the everyday experiences of teachers and students” [4, p. 161]. Wheatville’s boys did not value schooling because they believed they did not need it to be successful. Wheatville’s boys did not value schooling because it would appear that Wheatville did not value schooling for its boys.

The possibility that males in Wheatville were significantly more likely than females to be guaranteed secure, well-paid, local employment upon graduating from Year 12—regardless of their schooling performances—forced me to rethink my teaching approach. This shift led to a journey of discovery that has been ongoing. What that 15-year old boy so cogently articulated to me all those years ago was reinforced many times over by evidence collected from local schools. Resoundingly, in the community of Wheatville, girls as a cohort academically outperformed boys. This performance divergence was first noticeable at about nine years of age and continued throughout the next eight years of schooling. Comparisons of local boys’ and girls’ participation rates in university entrance examinations consistently demonstrated that girls were generally twice as likely as boys to participate in these examinations, thus making themselves eligible for tertiary studies upon leaving school. The more experience I gained as an educator, the deeper my realisation that the issue of Wheatville’s disengaged male students could not be addressed sufficiently through curriculum reform or teacher performance alone. This knowledge forced me to rethink my approach.

Looking beyond the school to the wider community

It was a source of pride within Wheatville that the community looked after its boys. Evidence of this could be found in the commonsense understandings that boys were entitled to employment regardless of their schooling performances, that farming land was passed down from father to son, that men took chief responsibility for financial and civic duties and that “boys were supposed to be boys”. Other commonsense understandings included, that it was natural for women to be the community’s homemakers, nurturers, and cultural gatekeepers and for girls to outperform boys at school.

Wheatville’s local newspaper, *The Wheatville Times*, worked to reinforce many of these limiting gender constructs. The paper used its social and sporting pages to represent local males as powerful, physical, reckless, courageous, successful, and bonded to their teammates, families and male friends through activities such as football, cricket, golf and the consumption of alcohol:

> Two brothers we know… one of whom was renowned far and wide for his ability to hit red cricket balls… played golf recently…. [They were] watching as opposition tipped back beer after beer and struggled to remain vertical. But while they sank the beers, they also sank the shots…. Both [brothers] are back in serious ‘training’, but it has nothing to do with golf.  

[Extract from *The Wheatville Times* social pages]

Conversely, articles and images from *The Wheatville Times* regularly depicted females in roles in which they were serving others, caring for others or being presented to the community
as debutantes or showgirls. Gender representations such as these help to reinforce power asymmetries that perpetuate masculine hegemony at the expense of female subordination and/or objectification. Fitz Clarence, Hickey, and Matthews (1997) claim that, “the forces of hegemonic masculinity, reinforced via the media, provide young males with powerful messages” [p. 25]. These messages can manifest in ways that delimit and diminish lives:

Hegemonic masculinity... narrowed their options, forced them into confining roles, dampened their emotions, inhibited their relationships with other men, precluded intimacy with women and children, imposed sexual and gender conformity, distorted their self perceptions, limited their social consciousness, and doomed them to continual and humiliating fear of failure to live up to the masculinity mark [3, pp. 5-6].

**Figure 1**: A particularly disturbing gender representation

**Figure 2 (below)**: My public letter critiquing the logo
Fairclough (1995) claims that media texts are particularly adept at vocalising and perpetuating dominant discourses that work to empower some whilst subordinating others. This understanding—combined with the high circulation rate of the local newspaper—worked to influence my decision to use *The Wheatville Times* as a platform for publicly contesting narrow representations of gender. In doing so I decided to critique a well-known local image.

Using an “only joking” motif the image had always bothered me. It depicted a male emu holding a can of beer whilst standing aggressively atop a bewildered looking female emu. Emblazoned above the two birds were the words “The plucked duck” (see Figure 1).

I found the implicit gender messages in the image particularly disturbing—not least because of its intended audience, the community’s youth. The emu was the emblem of the local rugby club and a cartoon figure of the bird had been used for many years to promote an annual social event attracting thousands of young people from across Wheatville and surrounding districts. The image was considered by its original creators to be both risqué and amusing: “It’s about the younger generation sticking it up the older generation” (past club President).

In September each year numerous versions of the Plucked Duck image were plastered across the town in the forms of flyers and posters. A particularly large version of the image hung as a banner across the main street. My intention was to write a letter to the editor that would make visible and

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**Figure 3 (below): Responses to my public letter critiquing the logo**

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**B&S logo just good clean fun**

*MRS LENNON’S conclusions about our B&S logo represent both an alarmist and nihilistic view of youth behaviour. As a brief history lesson, the logo for the B&S was commissioned as part of a comic strip by a talented local artist 20 years ago. The story goes (as previous captions would show) that our male emu (Eddie the emu) was protecting the honour of our female emu (Emma the emu) from a gang of drug selling emus. Eddie the emu observed the situation and stepped in to offer assistance to Emma and chased out a whole can of whoop a... to the gang members (which would be shown in the following cartoon captions). The drink in Eddie’s hand (could well be an energy drink?) was handed to him by his mates for sticking up for Emma in a spot of trouble. The mouth full of feathers could be those of the gang members from the ensuing scuffle. The long socks and garters merely show that our emus are both snappy dressers & may have nothing to do with rugby. The absurd association that Mrs Lennon makes between rape, violence, rugby and our very successful B&S is ridiculous in the extreme. It was disappointing that Mrs Lennon wasn’t able to see the positive side of our logo, perhaps she formed her opinion based on the media reports of incidents involving the poor treatment of women from some professional sportmen. Also, the B&S is run independently of the rugby club and neither condones violence, rape or the misusre of alcohol. The B&S are obligated to promote the responsible consumption of alcohol, which is a far cry from suggesting our logo promotes violence and rape as Mrs Lennon suggests it depicts. Whilst acknowledging incidents in society involving violence and alcohol, the overwhelming message promoted by the Wheatville B&S committee is one of fun and enjoyment for the youth with the opportunity to contribute by donating profits back to the community. The fact that she takes such a dim view of the culture of our B&S event, suggests some unpleasant past experience. Let’s give the current generation some credit and to Mrs Lennon there have been no incidences of violence towards females at our B&S events to date. The message of the logo could well be the epitome of Australian character in ‘sticking up for your mates’. I would suggest Mrs Lennon lighten up to remember, and reward, the enthusiasm of youth. Last report was that Eddie was still courting his female friend and that the relationship was going strong.*

*Former player and founding President*  
*Nick Burr*

**Logo no joke**

*I WHOLE heartedly agree with the comments espoused by Sharilyn re the Plucked Duck logo. It is no longer appropriate to continually, however covertly, perpetuate powerlessness over and violence towards women. Rape crisis and victim support groups have enough to battle without captions, like the one on the logo, however innately conveying the idea that it is “still okay.”*  
*Elle Wicks*  
*New Zealand*
problematise the toxic gender messages being broadcast by this image (see Figure 2).

Creating spaces for transformative thinking and action

Responses to my letter were many, varied and ongoing. They took the form of letters to the editor, media articles, blogs, emails, phone calls, heated debates at public and private venues, whispered moments of support and, on one ubiquitous occasion, the vandalising of my mailbox with numerous stickers of the logo—probably as a joke! The first week after my letter was published there were two responses to it in the local newspaper—one resisting my interpretation of the logo by claiming that it was ‘alarmist’ and ‘nihilistic’ and another supporting my interpretation (see Figure 3). A street poll conducted a few weeks later by a local journalist revealed that some community members had never noticed the logo before: “To be honest, I’d never noticed it until Sherilyn pointed it out” (local property owner and father in his forties). The most rewarding moments were when others joined with me and actively challenged practices and beliefs steeped in hegemonic masculinity and white male entitlement. These challenges took the form of public letters of support, financial incentives to change the logo and the withdrawal of funding from an organisation broadcasting offensive gender jokes at the local show. The board member withdrawing her company’s funding explained to me that, “unless we start acting on these things nothing will ever change. I would rather see that money used to support a different cause that doesn’t think it’s okay to publicly demean women” (field notes, 1 May).

The intensity of the debate opened up by my public unsettling reassured me that the image, and its toxic gender messages, would never again be permitted to reside invisibly within the cultural landscape of Wheatville.

Some concluding thoughts

My original letter to the editor was just 384 words in length, but it spawned thousands of words in written responses and many more in face-to-face conversations. Some community members publicly supported my views, some pulled me aside to share their stories or whisper their support, some were compelled to act with me and yet others strongly resisted my interpretation of the logo and positioned themselves defensively. The diversity of responses and reactions generated by my deliberate act of provocation reinforced for me the unpredictability and precarious nature of this type of educational work. It also reinforced for me the potency and value in creating spaces where hegemonic masculinity can be made visible and unsettled.

References

TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND PARENTING: ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

by KAY BOULDEN | August 2016, Vol. 25, No. 2

INTRODUCTION

Every year in Australia thousands of young women who are still in their teens become pregnant. A significant number are still at school, while others have already disconnected from education, often before achieving a qualification that will give them access to employment or further training.

AWE has engaged with this issue for many years. We have produced three publications authored by Kay Boulden, Present, Pregnant and Proud; Step by Step, Side by Side; and What it Takes, Supporting pregnant and parenting young people, as well as an issue of Redress focussed on this issue. We have also conducted two national conferences. After the second conference a new association emerged, The Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network. This association provides a network for schools and other services across Australia which conduct programs to support pregnant teenagers and young mothers. The association has a website which shares comprehensive information for members of the network and for young people wanting to locate a supportive program. The website can be found at:

http://youngpregnantandparenting.org.au

AWE also had extended contact with Megan Mitchell, who was the inaugural National Children’s Commissioner. Commissioner Mitchell conducted a national consultative tour investigating the issue and produced a report to the national government in 2017, the Children’s Rights report. The then federal government, to whom the report was presented, never responded to it, and few, if any, of the recommendations have been acted on at federal or state levels.

LESLEY McFARLANE AM

Australia’s teenage birth rate has fallen steadily since the 1960s and compares relatively well with both the UK and the USA.

- In Australia in 2015, 11.9 live births per 1,000 (a total number of 8,550) were recorded for women aged 19 and under.
- In England and Wales in the same year the birth rate was 14.5 per 1,000 for the same age group.
- In the US, the 2014 birth rate for the age group was 24.2 per 1,000.

However, when compared to other advanced economies in Europe and Asia, the situation in Australia appears less deserving of celebration. In France in 2014, the rate was 14.5 per 1,000; in Denmark, the Netherlands and Japan it was 4 per 1,000.

In addition, teenagers from already socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances are far more likely to continue their pregnancies than those from more privileged backgrounds, so that teenage parenting often has a multiplier effect on disadvantage.

There are also quite significant differences between teenage birth rates in various states and territories, which correspond in part with degrees of urbanisation, socio-economic profiles,
and levels of remoteness in different parts of the country.

There are significantly higher birth rates for teenagers living in remote areas, most likely reflecting differences in access to both contraception and termination services. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young women, especially those in remote communities, have the highest rate of teenage births in Australia. In 2007, 4% of all babies in Australia were born to teenage mothers, while 19% of all Indigenous babies in Australia were born to teenage mothers.

Programs to support young women are limited in Australia, and especially so for those living outside major metropolitan areas. Young mothers are likely to experience discrimination in relation to the resumption or completion of basic education. This is often due to young mothers having disengaged from education prior to school completion, or having had poor outcomes from schooling, often linked to existing disadvantage.

As a consequence, recommencing education in order to acquire the qualifications necessary for employment can be daunting. Despite the fact that the teen birth rate in Australia remains relatively high, there is no systematic approach to the provision of education support tailored to the needs of young mothers, nor more than a handful of dedicated programs around the country.

Although discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy or parental status is made illegal by both state and federal legislation, many pregnant and parenting young people and their families remain unaware of their rights to continue or resume their education. Despite a flurry of activity in the 1990s in relation to pregnancy, parenting and school completion, it is now very difficult to find information on the rights of pregnant and parenting young people to access education on the website of most state education departments.

The Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network (AYPPN) and its member organisations are aware of ongoing indirect discrimination against young women by virtue of this policy silence, as well as of direct (if often discreetly managed) discrimination by school and system leaders, whereby enrolments are cancelled without recourse to departmental procedures, young women and their families are left in ignorance of their rights, and subtle messages are given that the pregnant or parenting student is not ‘suitable’ for the school, or ‘unlikely to succeed’.

In a fairly typical example of a case brought to the attention of AYPPN a few years ago, a parenting 15-year old student in a public high school in one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities in Brisbane, was told by the principal upon her return to school following her baby’s illness that her absences meant she was no longer eligible to be at school, and that her enrolment had been cancelled. On the recommendation of a third party, assistance was sought from AYPPN, and a complaint was made to the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission. The case was finally heard by the Commission which found in her favour, but by then her absence from school had been prolonged by many months and the degree of rancour and tension between the principal, the student and her family was such that she decided not to return.

Most common is the failure of the school or educational institution to make reasonable provision for students who clearly have special needs given the multiple demands on their time and resources. The handful of programs around Australia that do offer tailored programs with inbuilt flexibility and support serve to highlight the level of neglect that surrounds this group of young women more generally.

Without education—something many young parents come to value highly because of their new responsibilities, regardless of their previous educational experiences—the path to employment and economic independence and well-being for themselves and their children is limited.

Neither education nor employment is a possibility for most
Neither education nor employment is a possibility for most young parents without access to quality, affordable childcare. Under current arrangements, many young parents find that by the time they have completed schooling, their childcare allocation has been used up, leaving them without affordable options for tertiary study. This has been an ongoing problem, and one in need of urgent attention.

In relation to housing, many young mothers find themselves without support from either the child’s father or their own family and friends, and often face the prospect of having no adequate accommodation. Homelessness amongst young parents is not uncommon; and though public housing may be available, it is often in marginalised areas of towns and cities which reduce access to services such as education, training and employment, and exacerbate the risks of social isolation.

The failure of successive governments to consider a whole-of-government approach to recognising the special needs of young parents and their children and providing a comprehensive range of supports to them, has contributed to a situation where the majority of the country’s young parents struggle—and often fail—to escape the cycle of poverty, poor education and lack of job skills, and in the process, open the door to a similar future for their own children.

The following recommendations are drawn from the publication What it Takes: Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Young People produced by the Association of Women Educators.

The full report is available at: http://www.publications.awe.
POSSIBILITY FOR MOST YOUNG PARENTS WITHOUT ACCESS TO QUALITY, AFFORDABLE options, MANY YOUNG PARENTS FIND THAT BY THE TIME THEY HAVE COMPLETED SCHOOLING, BEEN USED UP, LEAVING THEM WITHOUT AFFORDABLE OPTIONS FOR TERTIARY STUDY.

Recommendations are organised around three focus areas:
1. A national approach to improving outcomes for pregnant and parenting young people.
2. A national strategy to reduce teenage pregnancy and the teenage birth-rate.
3. A national approach to supporting young parents and their children.

Recommended strategies are underpinned by the following principles:
• They are consistent with the commitments of Australian governments to meet the requirements of Anti-Discrimination legislation, and obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
• They address both preventative and responsive action.
• They respond to the diversity of culture, language, socio-economic status, and geographic location of pregnant and parenting young people and their children.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A national approach
   i. A national approach to reducing the incidence of unintended teenage pregnancy, and to improving outcomes for pregnant and parenting young people and their children, should be developed as a matter of urgency through the mechanism provided by COAG.
   ii. Such an approach should be evidence-based, and supported by a sound research agenda which includes longitudinal studies to determine effective practice amongst diverse groups of young people, and which enables both national and localised strategies and appropriate targets to be developed.
   iii. It should be underpinned by an understanding of the complex factors, reflecting the experiences of young people over the course of their lives, involved in the sexual behaviours and pregnancy-resolution decisions of young people. It should demonstrate respect for the decisions they make about their lives, and ensure that the fact of parenthood at an early age does not result in long-term exclusion from education, employment and social connectedness; nor place the children of young parents at risk of long-term negative consequences.
   iv. It should commit to providing wider and more consistent support for young parents and their children while also responding to the demands of equity in the provision of services for diverse groups of young people in different parts of the country.
   v. It should adopt a whole-of-government, or ‘joined-up’, approach, and foster appropriate collaboration not only between government agencies at national, state, and local levels, but also between government agencies and non-government organisations.
   vi. Such an approach should specify responsibilities at all levels of implementation, and be monitored carefully over a significant period of time, with annual reporting to both government/s and the general public.

2. A national strategy to reduce teenage pregnancy and the teenage birth rate
   i. Develop and implement a long-term proactive strategy to reduce the teenage birth rate. Such a strategy should be part of a whole-of-government effort to reduce inequalities in the lives of families, thereby addressing the factors which predict higher rates of teenage motherhood amongst particular social groups. It should include a specific focus on:
      • Improving girls’ experience of, and attitudes to, schooling in the pre-adolescent years.
      • Providing ‘life option’ programmes for adolescents who may be disengaged from education, to provide alternatives to early parenting.
ii. The strategy should be accompanied by a comprehensive research and evaluation framework.
   • A key element of such a framework should be the development of a method of consistent data collection across jurisdictions in relation to teenage pregnancy terminations.
   • It should support further research to better understand teenagers’ decision-making process in relation to the resolution of unintended pregnancy, and their experiences of termination.
   • Given the higher health risks associated with teenage pregnancy and birth in under-15-year olds, current data collection and reporting needs to be modified to provide a clearer picture of the numbers of under-15 conceptions and births, and a more detailed profile of this cohort of young women.

iii. The strategy should develop, through the national curriculum project, a comprehensive high quality sex and relationships education program, which clearly identifies:
   • Its location in the core P-12 curriculum.
   • Key learnings for particular age groups.
   • Appropriate resources.
   • Strategies and resources for the provision of quality teacher training and professional development to ensure quality delivery in the classroom.

iv. A national sex and relationships curriculum should include a focus on:
   • The development of respectful relationships between boys and girls.
   • Knowledge about, and skill and confidence in using, contraception.
   • Addressing the range of attitudes and values that young people bring with them that shape their motivation to engage in early sexual activity and to use contraception.
   • Developing skills in resisting social pressures, identifying the nature of healthy relationships, problem solving and decision-making, negotiation, and assertiveness and communication about sexual activity and the use of contraception.

v. Such a curriculum should specifically address Australia’s social, cultural geographic and social-economic diversity in terms of content, teaching and learning strategies, and resources.

vi. Develop and implement a public education campaign to meet the needs of young people who are not engaged in formal education for accurate information about sex and relationships, and skills in negotiating relationships, sexual engagement and the use of contraception. Such a campaign should be:
   • A long term strategy regularly updated and refreshed.
   • Designed to meet the needs of diverse groups of young people including those:
     - with limited literacy skills;
     - whose first language is not English;
     - with disabilities; and
     - who live in isolated and remote areas.

vii. Improve access for teenagers to contraception, where possible via high quality youth-specific services.
   • Where youth specific services are not available, workers in generalist services, including doctors and nurses in general practice, should be provided with training to ensure that they:
     - provide accurate and unbiased information; and
     - treat young people with respect and sensitivity.

3. A national approach to supporting young parents

i. Convene a national whole-of-government working party to develop a comprehensive strategy to promote positive outcomes for young parents and their children, and to co-ordinate joined-up service delivery which responds to the diverse social, cultural, geographic, and economic circumstances of young families.
   • Key issues which should be addressed in such a strategy include:
     - reducing long-term welfare dependency and poverty;
     - improving secondary school completion rates and participation in post-school education and training by young parents;
     - improving the emotional health and well-being of young mothers; and
     - improving health outcomes for the children of teenage parents.

ii. It should be accompanied by a national review of service delivery, with a view to identifying areas where service needs are high and supply is low; and where the needs of particular groups are not adequately met. This should include:
   • A focus on current funding models with a view
to removing the uncertainty under which many services currently operate due to the non-recurrent status of their funding base.

• Greater provision of residential programs for pregnant and parenting young women who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, or who have other high-level needs that require a residential placement.

• A commitment to outreach services to target young parents who would not usually seek assistance from existing services.

• The provision of support to the parents/families of pregnant and parenting young people to assist them to develop the understanding and skills to assist their children and grandchildren.

• Identifying the service needs of young fathers in terms of emotional, social, and educational support.

iii. Develop a national research partnership to provide an evidence base for the development and evaluation of interventions to improve outcomes for young parents and their children.

• Prioritise research projects which focus on:
  - areas where there is an above average incidence of births to teenage mothers, for example, in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, especially those living in remote areas;
  - filling gaps in knowledge and understanding of the experiences and decision-making of pregnant teenagers, for example in relation to teenagers in culturally and linguistically diverse communities; and
  - the experiences and needs of young fathers.

iv. Improving secondary school completion rates and participation in post-school education and training by young parents should be underpinned by an acknowledgement of:

• The prohibitions placed on education authorities, schools and training bodies from discriminating either directly or indirectly in the provision of education services on the basis of pregnancy or parental status.

• The responsibility of schools and training institutions to work proactively to meet the needs of all students through instituting special provisions that are stable over time, and introducing sufficient flexibility in service delivery to respond to the changing demands on student-parents’ time and capacities.

• The need to consider alternative funding arrangements to ensure equitable distribution of high quality support for pregnant and parenting young people in education and training, including the development of differentiated partnerships that respond to the nature of the need at the local level.

• The need to develop specific strategies, including outreach initiatives, to re-connect young parents to education and training.

v. Review the proviso of childcare subsidies as they relate to young parents, especially in relation to the limitations of current JET funding to meet the needs of young parents who are completing secondary education and seeking to engage in post-school education and training.

vi. Support the development of better treatment of pregnant and parenting young people by mainstream health services by developing initiatives such as:

• Training for mainstream health professionals who deal with pregnant teenagers and young parents, to ensure that their experiences of ante-natal services, labour, birth and post-natal care are as positive as possible.

• Developing specialist training for midwives dedicated to working with young mothers, to enhance connections between clients and other health professionals.

• Identifying and skilling community members who could provide alternative forms of support to highly vulnerable pregnant and parenting young people especially in relation to their dealings with health providers.

vii. Support the development of confidence and skills in parenting via services and delivery methods that meet the needs of young people and are sensitive to their sense of being judged and scrutinised by the adult population, ensuring that such services are available to, and welcoming of, young fathers.

viii. Develop and implement a public education campaign to address the stigma still attached to teenage pregnancy and parenting, and to reduce the negative public scrutiny to which pregnant and parenting young people feel constantly subjected. Such a campaign should raise awareness of the ways in which local communities can support young parents and their children in the interest of the well-being of individuals and the community as a whole.
ANALYSING DEFINITIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

by PROFESSOR KAREN STARR | June 2018, Vol. 27, No. 1

INTRODUCTION

In the past 30 years, Redress has published several articles pertaining to educational leadership. However, the article by Karen Starr Analysing definitions of “leadership” in education still resonates with me as a leader in a secondary school.

Karen’s outline of the many externally imposed expectations on principals makes heavy reading—who would want to take on the job of being solely responsible for the outcomes of a school! For all the talk, discussion, and reviews of principals as leaders in a school over the past three decades, there is still no definition of what type of leadership principals are to develop in their schools.

Karen does give a clear definition of distributive, shared or collegial leadership and how this type of leadership is beneficial in gaining support with teachers and staff in schools. This type of leadership takes time, clear expectations and a commitment from all staff and workers in the school. Time as we know is limited and the principal is still at the mercy of the hierarchical demands of the educational system.

Articles such as Karen’s debate on the type of leadership in schools needs to be further developed more openly within schools, educational systems, and the government. Principals cannot carry the demands of the system by themselves, and we need to develop a process, with time, resources and training to distribute the leadership to support the wellbeing of all school leaders.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Karen Starr, PhD is the Inaugural Chair, School Leadership and Development in the Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, Australia. Prior to commencing her professorship in 2006, Karen was a school Principal for 15 years in South Australia and Victoria. She was Chief Writer of South Australia’s Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA), and in 2004 won the Victorian and Australian Telstra Business Women’s Award for the not-for-profit sector.

Karen recently developed the Graduate Certificate, Education Business Leadership at Deakin University (the first course in this field in Australia), and in 2015, she and the Education Business Leadership team won the Vice Chancellor’s Award for Teaching Excellence. Karen Starr’s most recent books are Above and Beyond the Bottom Line: The Extraordinary Evolution of the Education Business Manager (2012, ACER Press) and Education Game Changers: Leadership and the Consequence of Policy Paradox (2015, Rowman & Littlefield). Her latest book Education policy, neoliberalism and leadership practice: A critical analysis will be published by Routledge in 2018.

Karen has strong links with the finance industry through her work as a Director of Bank First (previously Victoria Teachers Mutual Bank).

In 2017 Professor Starr was awarded the Hedley Beare Educator of the Year Award by the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (Victoria).
LEADERSHIP IS A HOT BUTTON ISSUE in education. Leaders are expected to implement externally imposed education reforms, school improvement, enhanced student achievement outcomes and improved ‘standards’. These high expectations come on top of the busy life in schools, let alone a school’s own priorities and agenda for change. As a result, current policies and research suggests that education leadership is so complex and covers such a huge range of responsibilities that the skill sets required go beyond those found solely within an individual. ‘Distributed’, ‘shared’ or ‘collegial’ leadership forms are increasingly referred to—with these terms often being used interchangeably.

Distributed leadership differs from ‘traditional’ educational leadership conceptions that are usually characterised by:
- centralised, top-down decision making;
- hierarchical structures of control and systems of power;
- singular ‘individual’ responsibilities;
- externally assessed performance management systems;
- one-size-fits-all, universal policy prescriptions and procedures;
- standardised practices to create certainty and alleviate risk; and
- the perpetuation of the status quo.

There is now broad agreement that traditional notions of heroic, charismatic, inspirational leadership vested in a single individual—‘White Knight in Shining Armour’ conceptions—are no longer appropriate in education.

Distributed leadership embraces the understanding that one leader cannot possibly possess all the skills, knowledge, dispositions and time to lead each organisational function optimally and that teams best provide the skills, interests and knowledge required for leading and managing the contemporary school. The notion of followers’ is anathema to this way of thinking which assumes that leadership is exercised where it resides—everywhere and by everyone—with professionals possessing differing role titles co-operating in different ways towards common goals. Distributed leadership depends on a shared vision, a cooperative culture, and using the talents and interests of many for the common good. It also involves:
- democratic decision making;
- the distribution of tasks according to skills and interests with individuals having autonomy for initiative and innovation;
- shared goals, responsibilities, accountabilities and acknowledgement.

There are other reasons that distributed leadership may be more appropriate in education. Individuals in cooperative school cultures are more likely to achieve goals when they have had a part in their development, and they feel more committed, motivated, appreciated and a greater sense of institutional belonging. Heightened ‘worker’ commitment and involvement influences employee effectiveness, retention, morale and is attractive to recruits. Distributed leadership avoids overloading a few individuals at ‘the top’ with matters that can be dealt with by those who are most closely affected. Professional learning and development occurs simultaneously—with leadership being learnt on the job in context and in actual practice by personnel across the school. Distributed leadership reinforces positive values such as transparency and trust. It also enables people with specific skills to work across a school district to benefit many individual schools.
This is not to say that formal hierarchies are abandoned. There are still ‘executive’ leaders who maintain ultimate authority, who are spokespeople and who will, on occasions and perhaps with others, make tough decisions and deal with pressing confidential matters—although hopefully this latter example is the exception rather than the norm.

So, I was keen to find out what Australian educational leaders (principals, education business leaders, leading teachers and education policymakers) believed about ‘leadership’. I asked differing groups from around the country how they defined ‘leadership’. Some representative responses follow:

Leadership is to have a vision, model the behaviours to achieve that vision, then have others willingly follow.

Leadership is convincing followers. Leadership is the ability to influence and inspire colleagues in the fulfilment of organisational goals.

Leadership is the capacity to take others with you on a journey of change and improvement.

A leader is one who communicates with, and inspires those he or she leads. Leaders… make decisions, know their craft and are role models for others.

Leadership is inspiring people to change; getting people to follow you; creating openings; …it’s about guiding and influencing the conversation.

Similar sentiments about leadership were heard repeatedly and are found everywhere—even in leadership centres in ivy-league universities. In the minds of Australian education leaders, leadership is about motivating, influencing, facilitating change, while gaining and supporting ‘followers’ through trust and inspiration. These definitions are imbued with notions of the individual ‘leader’—who is visionary, charismatic, has infinite wisdom about what needs to happen and how, while being able to persuade and encourage others to create change towards his/her vision. These responses are normative and hegemonic because they appear in much literature and rhetoric on leadership, and in the media—especially during political election campaigns.

I then decided to investigate beliefs about leadership inherent in recent job descriptions for school principals. The ‘leader’ schools sought is quite an extraordinary individual, who has, to quote some examples:

- a compelling character and essential ability… to communicate effectively and inspire all sections of the school community to the highest possible standards of excellence;
- proactive leadership skills; who identifies problems before they are seen, and rectifies them before they become a problem;
- …the ability to set high expectations for others through role modelling appropriate behaviours and attitudes;
- the ability to build and maintain a teaching and non-teaching staff body of the highest standard; the ability to appoint, professionally appraise, counsel and terminate the services of academic and general staff;
- the ability to develop and implement short, medium and long-term strategies to achieve the mission and implement the policies of the Board;
- the ability to develop structures and processes that ensure the effective, efficient and timely realisation of goals, objectives and targets as part of the planning and accountability framework determined by the Board.

Beyond the institution, there are hopes that principals would:

- promote the school locally, nationally and internationally;
- participate in educational debates within the state and the nation; and
- play an active role in the wider educational community.

Surprisingly, only one school mentioned the requirement to have:

- a genuine interest in, and understanding of, young people and their education.

It was clear that job descriptions for principals embrace a conception of leadership embodied in one super-capable, multi-skilled, extraordinary individual who has all the answers and who is effective not only within the institution but whose influence stretches beyond its boundaries to include state and national (and even international) responsibilities. This is a very tall order. The leader must be inspirational, a role model, an arbiter, a capacity-builder and a compliant and accountable implementer of strategic plans and policies. S/he must ensure the commitment and dedication of others; have insights and foresight; and achieve a vision (alongside myriad other minor requirements too numerous to mention in this article).

Role descriptions such as these conflate leadership, making principals the legal authority, chief incumbent, the courageous, intrepid, trail-blazing frontrunner. The conception of leadership in these job descriptions is not distributed. Traditional leadership notions are pervasive. Hence, contradictory notions about leadership are circulating in education systems concurrently. Education leaders hold predominantly traditional views about leadership at the same time as the notion of ‘distributed’ leadership is gaining high prominence in education policy and research.

My research found that very traditional conceptions and assumptions about leadership are also embedded within accountability procedures; particularly those associated with individual performance appraisal systems. For example, it is
principals alone whose performance is judged on whether or not a school has met targets and expectations. As boards and governments place more emphasis on measurable performance outcomes, it is individuals not teams that are targeted for results. Education leaders with formal titles bear the brunt of contending with school outcomes, even though they are not solely responsible for them. This has concomitant implications for their future job prospects and longevity in the role. As a risk management strategy, school principals have precarious employment arrangements. They are hired on short-term contracts and can be fired or shunted to another position if boards deem their efforts to have fallen short.

A further point to make is that in Australian education, distributed leadership is targeted solely at the school level. There is no such understanding about the relationship between systemic and school leaders. At the central or district level, power is often even more hierarchically concentrated and individual school sites are not at liberty to challenge or contravene centrally determined policy or major decisions set down for implementation. Systemic decisions may involve ‘consultation’ but those with a higher authority have the final say.

Furthermore, traditional accountability systems do not allow school leaders to appraise or comment on the performance of those above them—on the board or in the systemic hierarchy. Neither are they permitted to comment publicly on education matters. In reality a centre-periphery power model operates. It is hierarchical, one-way and assumes power differentials between leaders and followers with decision-making authority at the top.

The same contradiction occurs at the political level, with government policy positions often imposed with little or no collaboration with the education profession.

Leadership is about power: who has it, how it circulates, how it is used, for what purposes and in whose interests. The traditional conception places all bets on an individual or a few individuals who have ultimate authority. In contrast, the distributed conception espouses the benefits of collective wisdom and skills emanating from diverse perspectives and experiences established in a collective way to ensure the least risk and the most propitious reliability, as evidenced in a court jury or a board of independent company directors.

In sum, traditional perceptions about leaders and leadership are held by many education leaders and other major stakeholders and are also embedded in formal texts such as job descriptions and accountability policies. The same conceptions abound amongst politicians and the Fourth Estate. It is also true that much of the literature on education leadership focuses solely on the ‘top’ jobs—usually the principalship. Hence while “the heroic leadership paradigm is a flawed” one, it cannot be said with any certainty that it is a “fading one”[2, p. 96].

There are problems with the pervasive heroic, gallant leadership conception: it perpetuates the myth that the solution to complex educational problems and school improvement is to find the correct person to fill the formal role at the top of the organisational hierarchy; traditional hierarchies bottleneck too many problems through to one individual, thereby impeding success; it puts people off becoming ‘leaders’ since the role appears too onerous, demanding, time-consuming and stressful, while existing incumbents may be reluctant to take on further formal leadership assignments. The traditional leadership literature is unrealistic in its expectations and the picture of leadership reality it encompasses.

Leadership is about relationships and actions rather than it is about an individual. It is a relational and shared activity, not a role. It is a verb rather than a noun [1]. A relational conception of leadership involves healthy scepticism; scrutinises taken-for-granted assumptions; probes various viewpoints, motives and interpretations; questions the interests served by policy or practice, and critiques the consequences of actions. Importantly, this inquiry focuses on whether education actions are beneficial for students.

Distributed leadership is not the be all and end all. It requires clear agreed purposes, decisions and accountability processes or it can become neglectful, frustrating and impotent at one extreme, or anarchic, divergent, confusing and destructive at the other extreme. If fully interrogated, distributed leadership tests notions of democracy, ethics and equity. It is apposite for the education context and its changing circumstances.

The way we define, talk and think about leadership is important because these factors influence both the way leadership is enacted and the expectations commonly held of leaders. While contradiction in policy and practice remains, however, genuinely distributed forms of leadership cannot be fully developed or realised.

REFERENCES
INTRODUCTION
In response to the Melbourne Declaration the Australian Curriculum sought to improve student understanding of the world around them through the inclusion of three cross-curriculum priorities—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia, and Sustainability. Although this was a commendable move, educators have faced significant challenges in implementing these in schools. In the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, schools able to access local elders have benefitted from the expertise and authority they bring.

This article, providing an in-depth evaluation of the curriculum, acknowledges the strengths of this priority, but also reveals gaps and inconsistencies. There is a sense of disappointment with the final version for, as the authors show, much more could have been achieved.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kevin Lowe is a Gubbi Gubbi man from southeast Queensland. He has had extensive educational experience including being a high school teacher, TAFE administrator, University lecturer, and NSW Board of Studies Inspector, Aboriginal Education. He has been actively involved in Aboriginal community organisations and Aboriginal language policy and curriculum development and implementation.

For the last 30 years Kevin has worked with schools and Aboriginal people to establish purposeful educational projects to integrate Indigenous epistemological knowledge and languages, histories and cultures into the classroom.

More recently he was appointed in 2016 as an Indigenous Post-Doctoral Fellow at Macquarie University to undertake research on the establishment of a sustainable, culturally enhancing model of educational improvement for Aboriginal students.

Dr Tyson Yunkaporta is the Senior Lecturer Indigenous Knowledges at Deakin University. A Doctor of Education, Indigenous researcher, traditional wood carver, author, arts critic and poet, Tyson belongs to the Apalech clan on Cape York, with adoptive and ancestral ties in multiple communities on the mainland.

Tyson has a decade of teaching experience, and a decade as education consultant and Aboriginal education specialist. He has worked on over a dozen Aboriginal language programs and developed local Aboriginal pedagogy frameworks in communities in several states.

Tyson’s research interests include Aboriginal cognition, Aboriginal pedagogies, Traditional Aboriginal concentration and memorisation techniques, IT in Indigenous communities, Indigenous Health, wellbeing and spirituality.

ABSTRACT
The analysis presented in this paper is an evaluation of the specific tagged ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ content as described in course Content Descriptions and Elaborations in each of the first four ACARA curriculum documents. The analysis is in three forms: 1) a multilayered cultural analysis based on work by Grant and Yunkaporta; 2) an analysis based on Bloom’s revised taxonomy of the cognitive expectations of student learning embedded; and 3) an analysis of the learning opportunities provided to students across a range of significant socio-political issues. The findings of this initial analysis raises serious questions about ACARA’s assertion that they intend to provide all students with the opportunities to develop a deep understanding of the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The paper argues that there appears to be a clear lack of or intention, on ACARA’s part to engage fully with the potential of the Australian Curriculum to integrate high-quality learning around the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
1. CONTEXT — THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CONTENT

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has as its statutory remit, the development of Foundation to Year 10 curriculum for the four learning areas of English, Mathematics, Science and History. This is to be undertaken in collaboration with a range of stakeholders, including state and territory school systems and curriculum authorities, teachers, parents, key industry bodies, and key peak bodies, including those representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ACARA has acknowledged that the Australian Curriculum must be relevant to the lives of all students, and address the many contemporary issues that students face. The development of the Australian Curriculum has been taking place over three broad phases, guided by two key documents: the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008) and The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011). The Melbourne Declaration sets out in the broadest terms the purpose and outcomes of schooling and post-secondary education; whilst the Shape Paper provides a background for the development and implementation of the first draft of Foundation to Year 10 courses that will make up the Australian Curriculum.

The Shape Paper identified that one of the priority areas to be addressed across all curriculum areas is the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. To this end, ACARA published The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curriculum Cross-curriculum Priorities [9] statement, which provides a conceptual framework which curriculum writers would use to embed learning experiences to allow all students to develop an understanding of the historical and contemporary lives, histories and cultures of Aboriginal people. ACARA argued that this is necessary in order to:

- ensure that all young Australians will be given the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, their significance for Australia and the impact these have had, and continue to have, on our world.

(Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011, p. 22).

The undertaking given by ACARA in the Shape Paper was translated into a draft document on the place of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum priority within the Australian Curriculum [1]. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priorities paper provided a rationale and framework for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ sense of identity and culture, within the three themes: People, Culture and Country and Place. These ideas were then developed into three ‘Organising Ideas’, with each in turn being expanded into three inter-related content areas. This it was claimed would guide the development of integrated and responsive teaching across the initial courses in English [2], Mathematics [4], Science [5] and History [3].

For that document to meet the stated purpose of providing a structural tool for embedding specific content, it had to be completed in time for it to influence the development and writing of curriculum. Consultation on the Cross-curriculum Priorities document was still continuing in late 2011—as ACARA was well aware long after the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) had endorsed both the curriculum Content Descriptions in December 2010, and Course Achievement Standards in October 2011. This inability to complete the Cross-curriculum Priorities document before the initial completion phase of curriculum development critically impacted on ACARA’s capacity to strategically scope the embedding of authentic curriculum content responsive to histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. ACARA’s tardiness in completing this document demonstrates a level of disingenuousness about not only their own curriculum development processes, but also their stated commitment to collaborate with all stakeholders in all phases of their work [9].

The analysis presented in this paper is a three-level evaluation of the specific tagged ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ content in each of the first four ACARA curriculum documents. It is based on an investigation of the curriculum content found in both Content Descriptions and Elaborations. The analysis is in three forms: 1) a multilayered cultural analysis based on work by Grant (1998) and Yunkaporta [31; 32]; 2) an analysis based on Bloom’s revised taxonomy [7; 18] of the cognitive expectations of student learning embedded within the learning statements of the four initial Foundation to Year 10 curriculum documents; and 3) an analysis of the learning opportunities provided to students, to expose them to the range of significant socio-political issues that represent significant turning points in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The authors examined the assertion given by ACARA that it would provide opportunities for all students to develop a deeper understanding of the cultures and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These have been mapped to key social and historical concepts that have been written into the documents in order to analyse the inclusion
of those events and issues that represent key elements of the ‘histories’ of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

This evaluation investigates whether this content is explicitly identified and if so, to what extent, in order to ascertain the depth of knowledge, skills and understanding to which students will be exposed.

The findings of this initial analysis raise serious questions about both the accuracy and genuineness of ACARA’s claim that they intend to provide all students with the opportunities to develop a deep understanding of the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We would argue that there appears to be a clear lack of will, ability, or intention, on ACARA’s part to engage fully with the potential of the Australian Curriculum to integrate high-quality learning around the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and a failure to adequately address the very issues and concepts that ACARA itself identified as being central to the development of student learning.

Postscript
In January 2012, ACARA released version 3 of the four curriculum documents and though it is not the intention of the authors to evaluate this latest iteration in this paper, a brief review of the amended curriculum documents would suggest that little has changed in the critical areas investigated in this paper. Of interest to the authors was whether additional content, either in the form of Content Descriptions or Elaborations, evidenced a change in ACARA’s thinking on how it intends to situate Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the Australian Curriculum. We would suggest that, while the overall quantum of references has increased in Version 3, the more critical question is whether additional ‘Aboriginal content’ evidences a significant correction to the curriculum, or whether it is a disingenuous attempt by ACARA to placate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by adding to the overall volume of content, while failing to address the cognitive, social, epistemological or ontological weaknesses identified in earlier consultations. Our view is that little has changed, and we are inclined to the latter interpretation, not the former.

2. CULTURAL APPRAISAL OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PERSPECTIVES IN THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

AN INDIGENOUS CULTURAL ANALYSIS TOOL

In seeking to undertake an analysis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the Australian Curriculum, a cultural matrix tool is proposed to measure both the breadth of content and depth of perspective. For breadth and integrity of Aboriginal content, we have employed Uncle Dr Ernie Grant’s Indigenous framework from Cape York (15). It comprises six elements, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Cultural matrix to measure breadth of content and depth of perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For depth of Aboriginal perspectives, four elements of Aboriginal epistemology/ontology from the Department of Education and Communities’ (DEC) Western Region Aboriginal pedagogy framework, 8ways (Yunkaporta, 2009) has been used: see Figure 1. This framework is increasingly informing program development and teaching practice in schools across New South Wales (Yunkaporta & NSW Department of Education and Communities - Western Region). The elements used here are not the pedagogies themselves, but the four elements identified as aspects of Aboriginal ways of valuing, being, doing and knowing (which relate to Indigenous perspectives, rather than Indigenised content).

Figure 1. 8ways pedagogical framework
(Yunkaporta, 2009)

These four elements comprise the columns of the matrix and the six elements of Dr Grant’s Indigenous framework form the rows (Table 2).
The presence of tangible items of Aboriginal culture and history in the Australian Curriculum is not in question. However, these do not necessarily represent Aboriginal perspectives. Indigenous ‘ways of knowing, being and thinking’ are flagged as ‘key concepts’ in the curriculum documents; however, these are intangible aspects of culture that cannot be represented by mere cultural and historical facts or items. Rather, they can be found in Indigenous protocols, values, processes and systems, as represented in Table 2.

### Mapping Indigenous knowledge

For the purposes of this appraisal, ways of being are regarded as axiology and ontology, represented by the perspective descriptors Values and Protocols. Ways of knowing are regarded as epistemologies, represented by the perspective descriptor Systems. Ways of thinking are regarded as cognition and practical methodology, represented by the perspective descriptor Processes.

The content descriptor Land encompasses perspectives on landscape, nature and natural phenomena. Language refers to perspectives on contemporary and historical communication forms. Culture refers to both tangible and intangible aspects of lived realities and expressions of ways of being, knowing and thinking. Time refers to perspectives on sequencing, chronology, temporal realities and cause-and-effect relationships. Place refers to the narrative, ritual and cultural meanings enfolded in spaces and landscapes through long-term occupancy and custodianship of land. The category Relationships refers to perspectives on the dynamic interaction between all the other elements, and the connections within and between human, spiritual and ecological systems.

Overall, this cultural analysis tool is a way of determining the presence—or lack—of the intangible cultural elements, specifically ways of knowing, being and thinking, that are flagged as key elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the curriculum documents. The objective is to determine whether cultural perspectives (not just cultural items viewed from non-Aboriginal perspectives) are included in the curriculum, and to measure the depth and breadth of cultural integrity expressed by these perspectives.

### Overall results of cultural analysis

A search for the keyword ‘Aboriginal’ in the Australian Curriculum website resulted in 142 matches, from which it was determined that 52 items actually dealt with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander concept of culture. Of these 52 items, many included examples in which there was a choice between Asian or other cultures rather than an Aboriginal focus for study. Only five examples of Aboriginal perspective items were included as Content Description (CD). Most items were content Elaborations (E), and are thus not considered as core content (Table 3).

Many of the Aboriginal perspectives items, even in the most basic ‘processes’ column, seemed to deal more with simple factual content rather than Aboriginal ways of thinking and doing. However, they may still have the potential for classes to explore as Indigenous processes rather than basic information seen from a non-Indigenous perspective, particularly if teachers genuinely choose to ‘elaborate’ on the content by providing students with deeper learning experiences. The use
of the word ‘choose’ is important here, since the Elaborations developed for each of the Content Descriptions are not part of the core or mandated content. This sends the message to teachers that they are not required to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing and thinking in any content that has been mapped as Content Elaborations. This appears to have been left to the teacher’s discretion—an approach that is at odds with the policy requirement that mandates the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives.

**Content descriptors**

Almost half of the items in Table 3 (25 of 52) fall under the descriptor Culture and mostly dealt with tangible aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material culture, history and pre-invasion tradition which most likely would be viewed from a non-Indigenous anthropological perspective if left to teacher discretion. The lowest-scoring descriptor was Place. There were seven items pertaining to the Language descriptor, representing elements of dialects of English or Indigenous expression in English literature, or Aboriginal (and international) vocabulary that has become part of Standard Australian English. Content descriptors that registered in the Values column were Land, Culture and Relationships, the latter being the one example where ACARA has developed a range of content across all four-perspective descriptors.

**Perspective descriptors**

Overall, only four items deal explicitly with Aboriginal ways of being, as indicated in the Values and Protocols columns in Table 3, under the content descriptors Land, Culture and Relationships, including Indigenous orientations to concepts of leadership and social organisation. Notably absent are Ethics and Law, the very elements that could inform student behaviour, high expectations and school–community relationships.

Of the 52 Indigenous perspective items, 18 appear under the Systems descriptor, which pertains to ways of knowing. Nine of these belong to the Culture descriptor, while the rest are distributed across Land, Language, Time and Relationships. Deeper engagement with Indigenous knowledge systems here could present schools with the potential to enrich programs with place-based local frameworks for knowledge transmission that are intellectually rigorous as well as culturally appropriate.

While public education is a long way from engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander epistemologies in this way, we would nevertheless argue for the desirability of a forward-looking Australian Curriculum in this respect, making provision for the professional educators and researchers who are currently striving to develop this kind of innovative practice and meaningful engagement with cultural knowledge pedagogy.

The highest-scoring perspective descriptor was Processes, with a total of 30 out of 52 items. Processes pertain to ways

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**Table 3. Cultural analysis of curriculum documents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Protocols</th>
<th>Systems</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>E1</td>
<td></td>
<td>CD1, E1</td>
<td>CD1, E3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E1</td>
<td>E6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>E1</td>
<td></td>
<td>E9</td>
<td>E15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CD1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>E1</td>
<td></td>
<td>E1</td>
<td>CD1, E2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of thinking and doing. As previously identified, the items included were given the benefit of the doubt in terms of their potential to deliver on actual ways of thinking or doing, rather than just the transmission and recall of basic cultural or historical facts. If these items were presented in a way that demanded application and transfer of Aboriginal ways of thinking and doing to a variety of contexts and disciplines, then the potential for inclusion of these perspectives in areas of mainstream content would be markedly increased.

One advantage of this kind of inclusion is that if Aboriginal perspectives were delivered across the curriculum as ways of knowing and doing within the curriculum Content Descriptions (rather than only as additional content) then concerns about diminished space for mainstream content could be neutralised.

3. COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONTENT IN THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Evaluation taxonomy

Not only are there concerns raised about the depth and breadth of the ACARA's curriculum engagement with Indigenous culture and knowledge, but there is also concern that the descriptions of the curriculum items embed low-level cognitive expectations on student learning. Strauss (2000) defined curriculum as the manifestation of an intellectual construct about the nature of course content, students' understanding of that content, and students' cognitive development. It is argued that this allows teachers to construct learning experiences for students based on their understanding of the domain content, on a perception of students' cognitive development based in part on teacher expectations of student capacity, and on the explicit level of cognition specified within the curriculum itself.

It is this nexus between the ascribed level of cognition within the curriculum content, and the specifically tagged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, that is the focus of this study. The analysis draws on the revised Bloom's taxonomy [7] to attain an understanding of the minimum cognitive requirements of this content and to ascertain an understanding of its potential impact on student achievement of knowledge and understanding of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As in the Bloom's original cognitive taxonomy published in the 1950s, the revised taxonomy is a hierarchy based on six categories of cognitive process dimensions. While there are a number of significant changes in the new taxonomy, it is still conceptually similar to that developed by Bloom in 1956 [6], with the integrity of the taxonomy continuing to rest on the understanding that the six cognitive dimensions move from a lesser to greater cognitive complexity, and that this evolving complexity impacts on teacher's pedagogic practices as they engage in designing teaching programs [24].

Simply stated, the revised Bloom's taxonomy categorises thinking skills from the concrete to the abstract. The lowest three levels of the cognitive domain taxonomy are remembering, understanding and applying, while the higher three levels are analysing, evaluating and creating. Within this framework, there is an implied correlation between the order of skills required to achieve the level of learning and the expectations placed on the learner. It is argued that effective learning builds on what the learner knows, towards acquiring new knowledge, skills and understanding. Recognising the potential of this cognitive hierarchy enables teachers to develop programs underpinned by content that reinforces higher learning expectations and deepens understanding [7].

The use of Bloom's taxonomy in the analysis of the explicitly identified cognitive requirements in the Australian Curriculum is supported by its broad-based acceptance within education, in identifying the cognitive strengths of student learning embedded in both curriculum and assessment [22]. The taxonomy, which is a schema for classifying educational goals, objectives, and educational standards, provides an organisational structure that applies a commonly understood meaning to the specific learning objectives in the curriculum. It is argued that when considered in tandem with the previous cultural analysis, it is possible to use the taxonomy to achieve a clear, concise visual understanding [18] of the ACARA content as it aligns to educational standards and goals, objectives and their actualisation as teaching programs and activities [14].

The four ACARA curriculum documents were analysed such as to obtain an indication of the level of knowledge and cognitive processes explicitly required by the ACARA curriculum. It is important to note that, at a minimum, teachers are expected to develop teaching programs based on these learning requirements. We realise and acknowledge that many teachers will, of course, teach beyond the specific cognitive expectations in the curriculum, just as they might in any other subject if it is of particular interest to them, but this cannot be expected or taken for granted. Consequently, this analysis is of the curriculum as it is described within the course Content Descriptions and Elaborations.

The link between curriculum content and teaching and learning specifically extends to the assessment of curriculum content knowledge, skills and understanding. The development of achievement standards, which is based on these content Elaborations, compounds the impact on student learning, because not only are teachers' programs informed by this content, but student achievement will also...
Table 4. Summary of an analysis of all Phase 1 content in the ACARA curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Cognitive Dimension</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remembering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51 (61%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (12%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (17%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

be reported against achievement statements developed from the very same course content.

**Discussion**
A search of the four curriculum areas revealed 142 instances of the word ‘Aboriginal’ across the four syllabus documents, falling to 83 discrete items when the ACARA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cross-curriculum Priorities tag was applied. A summary of the analysis of the items shown in Table 4, maps the cognitive elements from the Revised Taxonomy that appear in the curriculum for each year of schooling. The number of items in each cell of the table represents the total number of key verbs found in the entire curriculum Content Descriptions and Elaborations that indicate the level of cognitive abstraction required to achieve the designated learning outcome in a particular school year.

Of the 83 items, 64 fell within the three cognitive dimensions remembering, understanding and applying. Verbs such as ‘identify’, ‘recall’, ‘recognise’, ‘research’, ‘investigate’ and ‘classify’ were used to describe the level of cognitive engagement, indicating to the teacher that the teaching and learning experiences in those areas have particular cognitive expectations of what is required of students to learn, know or do. While it is appropriate to cognitively scaffold student learning as students progress through their learning to support their engagement with new knowledge and skills, it is also essential that students are empowered to construct their own learning by being challenged to ‘achieve new understanding and knowledge through accessing challenging higher-order learning’ [26]. Curriculum has a powerful role in supporting teachers to develop quality-learning experiences by clearly describing a range of content that embeds high order learning outcomes [16].

An analysis of the cognitive expectations within the English and History curricula show that there has been an attempt to direct students to ‘examine’, ‘question’ and ‘compare’, all of which sit within the analysing dimension of the taxonomy. It should be noted that in the History curriculum ACARA has used concepts rather than descriptive verbs to identify the level of intended cognitive engagement, necessitating a modified analytical approach compared to the other three documents, which has made the drawing of conclusions based upon a direct comparison between all four curricula somewhat problematic.

The analysis of both the History and English curricula shows that the majority of content occurs in the primary years, particularly in Year 4, as there are only 18 items out of 83 that have been written for Years 7 to 10. The lack of balance in the placement of content fuels concerns about the curriculum...
embedding low cognitive requirements, as it is mainly in the secondary years that students are increasingly provided with opportunities to hone critical capacities that are supported through high-order learning.

Dissimilarly, the targeted content in the Science curriculum has been written for inclusion in both primary and secondary years, but in all instances the content is pitched at the lowest understanding level. Learning at this level typically requires students to ‘acquire’ or develop an ‘understanding’ of concepts through ‘considering’, ‘researching’, ‘investigating’ and/or ‘explaining’ the technologies and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The weakness of this content is that it provides little opportunity for teachers to extend student learning, or broaden their cognitive engagement. Similarly, the curriculum does not provide teachers with the content to explore the social context in which knowledge is developed, or of the possibility that Indigenous knowledge has its ontological validity independent of that of the ‘hard’ sciences.

Of the four courses, the Mathematics curriculum is the most limited in content that addresses an Aboriginal perspective. Of the few that are included, five are situated in the primary years and, as in Science, are located at the understanding level of the taxonomy. The only two Content Elaborations in the secondary curriculum appear in the analysis of statistics and data in Year 10, where students are asked to compare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations with the Australian population as a whole. It is unclear as to whether teachers are expected to provide an opportunity for students to critically analyse why such a statistical discrepancy exists between data sets for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. We would suggest that these sequences of learning exemplify the larger argument of how the ACARA curriculum development process has embedded a deficient understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their experiences and their epistemologies—through both the choice of content, and the underpinning level of learning cognition identified within that content.

Overall, there is a significant disparity between both the quantity and the quality of the cognitive learning embedded in the items, as well as the disconnect between the coherence of learning between the primary and secondary years, with 65 out of the 83 instances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content occurring across Foundation to Year 6. We would suggest that the impact of these limited learning opportunities at secondary level minimises the capacity of the curriculum to fully develop students’ engagement in higher-order learning at a time when they reach greater cognitive maturity and capacity to participate in complex and integrated learning.

The analysis of the cognitive requirements of the four syllabuses demonstrates that 68 items of content have been embedded in lower-order outcomes found in the remembering, understanding and applying dimensions. While acknowledging that learning across Foundation to Year 10 should be written to draw on prior knowledge, and should scaffold student learning to achieve the grounding of foundational knowledge and skills, it is expected that at each stage of learning they are also exposed to higher levels of knowledge, understanding and skills, and develop deeper understanding of more complex curriculum outcomes and content. Effective teaching practice, based on a high-quality curriculum, should inform student learning and assessment by incorporating content that requires teachers to work with students in those cognitive domains that require them to analyse, evaluate and create. For the acquisition of curriculum knowledge and understanding to evolve across the years of learning, it would be expected that the curriculum would ensure that students were provided with ever-richer opportunities as they moved through their secondary education. This analysis highlights that only four items of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in Years 7 to 10 were written for the more cognitively challenging levels of Bloom’s taxonomy.

The level of disconnect between the aspirations expressed in the Shape Paper and the reality evidenced within the ACARA curriculum, reveals either an inability or an unwillingness to translate these aspirations into a quality curriculum.

The mapping of the embedded cognitive requirements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cross-curriculum Priorities in the Australian Curriculum denotes a consistent lack of rigour in both the scope and depth of cognitive engagement across the Foundation to Year 10 curriculum. The mapping of the mandatory Content Descriptions and depth studies and the optional Elaborations further demonstrates that there are few opportunities for teachers to engage students in explicit teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. We would suggest that students are not being enabled to critique their own contemporary environment, or develop informed judgements about the place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have within the broader ‘Australian’ body politic in which they and both communities co-exist.

4. SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF KEY TERMS IN THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

One of the core aspects of the state’s control of education is its capacity to initiate the development of curriculum. One
### Table 5. Summary of social and political content in the ACARA curriculum documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Justice Area</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>Year 6</th>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal rights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Invasion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonisation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen generation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Social justice</td>
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<td>Aboriginal identity</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Terra Nullius’</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal self-determination</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal autonomy</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal sovereignty</td>
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<td></td>
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**Note**

- **Mid grey** highlights those years where there is no mention of any of these elements.
- **Dark grey** highlights those concepts where there is no direct identified curriculum content.
- **Paler grey** highlights where there are two or fewer tagged content statements attached to this year of learning.
Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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</table>

Summary of social and political content in the ACARA curriculum documents

- Paler grey highlights where there are two or fewer tagged content statements attached to this year of learning.
- Dark grey highlights those concepts where there is no direct identified curriculum content.
- Mid grey highlights where there is no direct identified curriculum content.

Social Justice Area

- Colonisation: 2
- Invasion: 1
- Aboriginal languages: 1
- Reconciliation: 1
- Aboriginal identity: 3
- Social justice: 1

Total: 10

Discussion

The information in Table 5 was obtained from a word-and-phrase search of all four ACARA curriculum documents. In some cases the search terms has had to be manipulated to locate content for terms such as ‘social justice’ and ‘Aboriginal rights’. Consequently, Table 5 may not be a definitive list of all possible relevant content, but is indicative of the general placement of content specific to these terms within each document.

The items assessed in this evaluation were generated from a scan of the glossaries in current New South Wales syllabuses, and represent a smaller but indicative listing of the historical and contemporary issues addressed within current state curriculum. Research from a variety of educational jurisdictions in both Australia and overseas has shown that it is possible to teach social justice outcomes by providing all students with opportunities to develop an understanding of the historical and ongoing impact of the social, political, legal and religious oppression of minority students and their communities. It has been shown that there are both personal and broader social benefits that accrue to students exposed to explicit and purposeful teaching about social justice, with students more likely to perform well at school and be better adjusted socially [11; 12]. In essence, an education that primarily serves the interests of the dominant section or culture creates a context in which schools are unlikely to acknowledge let alone embrace the equal rights of minority students, their cultural knowledge or historical, social and cultural background and experiences.

McCarthy et al. (2005) noted that, in America, those entrusted with the responsibility of curriculum development have continued to take a conservative position that denies the ‘teeming multiplicity’ of the world that sits outside the school gates, preferring instead to perpetuate the myth of cultural homogeneity and social normalisation (p. 156). The failure of the Australian Curriculum to provide support for teachers to construct student learning to illuminate these contentious issues ensures that major areas of historical and contemporary national public policy, vis-à-vis Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, remains largely uncontested within the curriculum. Indifference to these issues denies all students the opportunity to be informed about those socio-political discourses that have forged the environment in which Aboriginal people exist in Australia today. Further, not only does this failure affect all students’ learning opportunities, but also, in particular, it denies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their communities the ability to interrogate the historical, social, political and economic circumstances of their disenfranchisement from the state. It is, in fact, arguable that ACARA has essentially perpetuated the long tradition of curriculum jurisdictions in developing an un-problematised, anglo-centric version of history and social experience, in which they have chosen the limited corpus of ‘significant’ events through which students are invited to explore a sanitised version of the nation’s shared history with its Indigenous peoples.

Evidence continues to mount that Indigenous or First Nation communities are victims of a systemically supported amnesia of the importance of home cultures and languages to a student’s wellbeing, and a failure to address the impact of linguistic and cultural stereotyping and racism on students and their communities. It has been noted that the level of cultural and linguistic dissonance between Indigenous peoples and mainstream education are such that, without direct and sustained intervention in both the curriculum and pedagogic domains, these deeply embedded biases will continue to affect the educational opportunities of minority students.

A key element in developing a culturally responsive pedagogy is a high-quality curriculum from which teachers can be guided in developing structured learning experiences.
from Foundation to Year 10 [13]. It is our contention that the capacity of teachers to develop a contextual and responsive learning environment will be significantly determined by the manner in which the Australian Curriculum is constructed, and whether it directs high-level learning opportunities that are situated in meaningful ways that are culturally appropriate to the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**Analysis**

Table 5 shows the quantum and sequencing of the key social, political and legal issues that define, shape and explain the social, political, economic and legal agendas that have impacted on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This evaluation focused on the inclusion of these 15 identified key social justice concepts within the Phase 1 ACARA curriculum documents.

Table 5 indicates where this content has been mapped. It clearly identifies that, in areas for which content has been written, none appears in more than two of the potential eleven school years from Foundation to Year 10 for which these courses have been written. The exception is the concept of ‘Aboriginal Identity’, where items have been included in Years 2, 4 and 8. It is notable that the Year 10 Depth Study in History is the one instance in which students are provided an option to study the push for acceptance and access to human rights and freedoms in the post-WWII period. However, even at the Year 10 level, the cognitive level of the content is limited in both its scope and depth. The curriculum has been written to provide little opportunity to explore Aboriginal peoples’ own direct actions to challenge systemic racism, or of the counter efforts of government to deny, limit, remove or deny citizenship or human rights from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The low-level learning attached to the content further weakens the potential of this study. Of the five Elaborations within this study, three have been written at the understanding level, while only two ask students to analyse the consequences of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples. Even the opportunity to interrogate the commonalities of the Indigenous experience across nations, of invasion and colonisation, is left unexplored, other than for a reference in the Year 9 topic on ‘nation making’, and the ‘intended and unintended’ consequences of ‘contact’ on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Even a generous interpretation of this view of history by teachers would not provide students with an informed understanding of the effects of colonisation, or of the similarities between the colonial power’s justifications for annexation, loss of sovereignty, and removal of Indigenous peoples from their Country.

**Omissions**

The omission of many of the key concepts identified in the analysis tests the claim by ACARA that the curriculum provides all Australian students with the capacity to develop a deep understanding of the experiences, histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There appears to be an absence of content that would enable students to explore many of the significant social justice issues that have impacted on the daily lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Key concepts such as native title rights to ancestral land, self-determination, social agency, and collective resistance to the range of government policies and/or the long-term effects of colonisation remain largely hidden from student inquiry.

Similarly, the Phase 1 curriculum documents do not provide opportunities for students to examine past and ongoing conflicts over the right to land, and appraise and evaluate the statutory and judicial processes of the state that continually denied Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples sovereign legal rights to Country, cultural practices and their own and unique epistemologies. Perhaps the most significant omission relates to the very concept of social justice, and its central place within the construct of the contemporary ‘democratic’ state. We would suggest that unpacking this concept would provide a key framework for school discussion on the levels of social, economic and political disengagement seen in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is difficult to explain that such fundamental concepts are neither represented nor challenged in a contemporary curriculum designed to prepare students for the complex, interconnected world that fashions many students’ social experiences.

5. CONCLUSION

The ACARA Shape Paper promised much in regard to both the quality and scope of content. The hope was that the Australian Curriculum would underpin opportunities for all students to develop deep knowledge and understanding of the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, it is clear from this analysis that in each of the initial Phase 1 courses, ACARA has failed to fulfil this promise. It would appear that the opportunity is fast evaporating to develop a quality curriculum that would advance a deep understanding of the histories and cultures of Indigenous Australia. The questionable level of cultural inclusivity afforded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is compounded by low learning expectations, underpinned by inadequate attention to cognitive engagement of student learning and a minimal inclusion of key social concepts and issues. It would be fair to summarise the current inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content as weak, often tokenistic and overwhelmingly unresponsive to historical and contemporary realities. It is strongly recommended that the states, territories and commonwealth pressure ACARA to postpone the final signoff of these curriculum documents.
until such time as they are modified to take these and similar issues into account.

This finding is similar to one made by Rizvi and Crowley [25] who noted that curriculum developers generally lacked the will, or the courage, to face the challenge of building key national documents that were responsive to the socio-economic context of students’ actual lives and experiences. The consequence of ignoring the social realities of twenty-first century students is to foster a skewed learning environment in which areas of contemporary social history are ‘whitewashed’ simply by being largely left out of the privileged content of a national curriculum. McCarthy et al. (2005) noted, too, that any process of curriculum development that has largely failed to acknowledge the social and cultural identities of ethnic minorities within the multicultural state is primarily a consequence of the tight controls exerted by the state over the construction of curriculum. The process of including only that content that privileges the epistemological and ontological experiences of the colonising cultures over those of the Indigenous peoples is part of a larger colonialist project that has consistently sought to limit the opportunities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to interrogate the lived experiences of both the colonised and coloniser populations.

In its attempt to legitimise the Eurocentric cultural and historical perspectives, ACARA has fallen short of its stated goals, shrugging off their responsibility to provide the content needed by teachers to address with students the point of tension between the divergent positions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Instead, ACARA has timidly opted to shift this responsibility to the often ill-resourced classroom teacher who, unsupported by curriculum, must now try to create an intelligible, sequenced and contextual learning experience for all students. We acknowledge that, while many teachers will continue to provide students with these learning experiences, this should surely be supported by an explicit, high-quality curriculum. What is clearly lacking from ACARA is a sense of a learning entitlement that would provide all students with the knowledge and understanding to appreciate the nature and form of the shared and parallel histories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians [9, p. 7].

In conclusion, ACARA has a stated committed intention to “ensure that all young Australians will be given the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, their significance for Australia and the impact these have had, and continue to have, on our world” [9]. It has been argued here that this has patently not been achieved. Overall their stated intentions have not translated well into the four curriculum documents, either in quality or in substance. There is scant evidence that what little material has been included has been adequately scoped across the years of learning, or cognitively matched to its intended purpose. The presented analysis demonstrates that the curriculum content does not provide teachers with the necessary tools to construct learning experiences that would provide students with the depth and breadth of content needed if they are to acquire a deep knowledge and understanding of the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their significance within the Australian state.

A further recommendation is that a panel of Indigenous academics with demonstrated expertise in curriculum design and development, and research on Indigenous ontology, epistemology and cognition, be asked to carry out a thorough appraisal of the national curricula with a view to recommending substantial improvements.

Thirdly, it is also recommended that strategies be developed to support state educational jurisdictions to develop teaching and assessment policies for embedding meaningful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content across the curriculum.

REFERENCES


WHAT IS YOUR GENDER LENS?

INTRODUCTION

A “gender lens” suggests a critical focus on gender and power dynamics and the impacts in our personal, social, natural and political worlds… but of course we have multiple lenses that we look through, as our identity and how we position ourselves and others is complex, multi-faceted and fluid. The rich diversity of accounts in this article from the #MeToo edition of Redress comes from teachers, principals, social workers and researchers working in a variety of contexts and spaces.

The importance of a gender lens is described in terms of:

• how I see, feel and discern gender relations and stereotypes;
• the specifically conscious unpacking of our unconscious understanding of gendered roles and the effect that they have on our thoughts and actions;
• strong gendered histories of these institutions as ‘masculinity-making’ contexts;
• ‘heteronormativity’—Initially I was interested in issues such as the sexual double standard;
• making visible the discourses, power relations and ‘cultural scripts’ that legitimate, constrain and shape certain ways of ‘doing gender’; and
• critiquing assumptions that we bring to our own ‘gender’ lens in our judgements.

Some respondents asserted the limitations of a single lens —“essentialising feminism and eliding intersectionality” —and called for a “more balanced, ‘bigger’ perspective of Western world views and social organisation and the way knowledge, roles, responsibilities and practices are situated within unequal power relations”. Only if we include “people’s experiences of religion, community, sense of belonging, processes of migration, experiences of power and abuse, more complex lens of intersectionality where race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, class, ability, culture and age inform understandings of a gendered experience, can we have a meaningful representation.”

More than ever, national action for the prevention of gendered violence and respectful relationships education calls for critical and intersectional approaches based on deep understanding of gender, sex, sexuality, as well as broader issues of social justice, inclusion and REDRESS!

MARIA DELANEY
Over many years of gender reform in Australian education, the term ‘gender lens’ has been drawn on to encourage educators and others working for gender equity and justice to look critically at how gender is constructed and how it plays out in learning spaces. This term invites us to think about how we position ourselves and position others within various discourses and understandings about gender. Taking up a gender lens, however, means different things to different people. As the following rich accounts from teachers, students and researchers highlight, it is understood and approached in different ways. It is certainly not an unproblematic concept as some of the accounts bring to light, and nor should it be; as such it should be open to critical examination.

Gender identities and relations are complex, multi-faceted and fluid. They are brought into existence within social spaces and through social relations in political and value-laden ways. In this edition of Redress we wanted to share a collection of insights from a wide range of people about what a gender lens means to them. From their personal and professional position, they were asked to define their gender lens. The following accounts might stimulate your thinking about your own gender lens.

Associate Professor Amanda Mooney, researcher, Deakin University

In applying a ‘gender lens’ to my work in boys’ physical education and the elite women’s sporting contexts of cricket and various football codes, I have found myself continually challenged by the strong gendered histories of these institutions as ‘masculinity-making’ contexts. To draw on the analogy of the ‘lens’, by naming and framing institutions as ‘gendered’, practices that (re)produce gendered ways of being can often become insidious, invisible, or as De Certau [2] argues, ‘practices of everyday life’. Inspired initially by the work of Foucault [3, 4], and more recently that of Butler [1], the application of a ‘gender lens’ in my work has been as much about making visible the discourses, power relations and ‘cultural scripts’ that legitimate, constrain and shape certain ways of ‘doing gender’, for as Butler [1] reminds us, rarely are subjects able to ‘do gender’ freely. As such, applying a gender lens invokes analyses of the ‘constitutive acts’ that produce performances of gender that are contextual, normalised and often obscured. Yet importantly, it also draws attention to ‘whose lens’: The materiality of a female body in the context of some elite sports like football where competitiveness, combative contact, and aggression can be privileged within hypermasculine discourses, is often scrutinised by others when these bodies ‘do gender’ in masculine ways. As such the onus is on critiquing assumptions that we bring to our own ‘gender’ lens in our judgements about female sporting participants.

References
The application of a ‘gender lens’ in my work has been as much work of Foucault [3, 4], and more recently that of Butler [1]. Butler argues, ‘practices of everyday life’ are ‘gendered’, practices that (re)produce gendered ways of ‘doing gender’. Inspired initially by the analogy of the ‘lens’, by naming and framing institutions as ‘masculinity-making’ contexts. To draw on the materiality of a female body in the context of combative contact, and aggression can be privileged within the onus is on critiquing assumptions that we bring to our understandings about gender. Taking up a gender perspective invites us to think about how we position ourselves and position others within various discourses about making visible the discourses, power relations and experiences of female doesn’t really exist.

**Alexandra, human rights casework supervisor**

I appreciate the opportunity (to think about what a gender lens means to me) but when I sat down to write, to be honest, I felt uninspired by the term ‘gender lens’. I have not studied a gender lens so maybe I’m missing some of the depth and complexity. Gender clearly informs all the work we do here at the centre; we explore people’s experiences of religion, community, sense of belonging, processes of migration, experiences of power and abuse, all primarily through the experience of women. But working as part of an organisation that supports women from a highly diverse and often marginalised community, I feel like gender, whilst essential, is merely the outline of a form and only with a much more complex lens of intersectionality where race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, class, ability, culture and age inform understandings of a gendered experience, can we have a meaningful representation. More and more we are understanding that a universal experience of female doesn’t really exist.

**Dr Claire Charles, researcher**

For me a ‘gender lens’ has always been quite closely linked with what I later realised might be called ‘heteronormativity’. Initially I was interested in issues such as the sexual double standard and the ways in which particular behaviours and ways of acting were seen as ok for men and boys but not for girls or women, and in the ways that sexual harassment of women and girls (and some men and boys) can be a daily occurrence in schools. These days I would broaden my gender lens to include a queer sensibility with regard to the kinds of lives and identities that are assumed to be ‘normal’ and require no explanation. A key part of this is the issue of recognition—is my identity/body/family automatically recognised by others? Or do I often feel as though I am unrecognised or need to explain myself to others as I move in and out of different social spaces? Which social spaces might feel safer or more welcoming in this way? In what ways do schools both reproduce and challenge heteronormative discourse, in order to help make life more liveable and validated for more people?

**Catherine, primary school teacher**

To me a gender lens is the specifically conscious unpacking of our unconscious understanding of gendered roles and the effect that they have on our thoughts and actions. A gender lens can uncover the latent biases that exist due to the traditionally constructed roles of men and women over the centuries across the globe. These roles have often been constructed by heteronormative men for the express purpose of protecting the status quo for heteronormative men, but they have been adopted by men and women alike. Our gender biases are unintentionally applied unless we consciously stop and adjust our perspectives. The social conditioning that permeates life is not necessarily applied maliciously but is unwittingly and persuasively restrictive. It is redundant in a world which believes in equality amongst people. A gender lens should be applied to embrace inclusion in every area of our lives, and with continual self-reflection and adjustment it can be. In an ideal world every interaction we have with every person should refute the socially constructed ideas of gender norms and delight in the possibilities available to everyone.

**Lucinda, researcher**

A gender lens is a tricky notion for me as a feminist academic. I am very influenced by the work of Patti Lather and try to avoid linguistic vestiges of positivist science. The lens places a distance between the scientist and his [sic] subject. A “feminist” lens risks essentialising feminism and eliding intersectionality. A lens can be taken up or set down, suggesting that biases and assumptions of individuals can be negated by prostheses. “Lens” is also an ableist term, claiming vision’s superior acuity. “The fetish of the lens”, written with Dr Ben Whitburn [1], discusses all the above!

**References**

For Australian Indigenous Peoples, Knowledge is held collectively and is situated. This means it is based within where you come from. There are distinct language groups (nations and clans) throughout Australia, and knowledge is particular to that area. There are clear rules relating who is meant to hold certain Knowledges and who is not. And this is organised around roles, practices, responsibilities and obligations that preserve, maintain and invest ongoing vibrancy across a broad range of domains, and often these are ‘gender’ based. These rules are laid down in the Dreaming, which is the ‘blueprint’ of life that encompasses the past, present and future. It is therefore about sense-making according to cultural logic that is geared towards continuity, and is dependent upon relationships and relationality; that is, the sets of relationships between all things, including Country (which is the land, waterways, airways and everything in it). It is about maintaining balance and ‘whole’ Knowledge is not made at an individual level, but rather is made whole with everything balanced and relating to everything else. Thus whole knowledge is constantly held, although not always visible or articulated, but our cosmology, or world view, ensures this is so. For me as an Aboriginal woman, then, a gender lens is more of a moving but coherent set of relations, articulated, but our cosmology, or world view, ensures this is so. For me as an Aboriginal woman, then, a gender lens is about examining the culture, practices and environment of our school, exploring how the constructions of gender and break the cycle within our school as well as within our own practices.

Therefore, our new understanding of a gender lens is about examining the culture, practices and environment of our school, exploring how the constructions of gender are enacted by and influence our students, staff and families and engaging our whole community to challenge what they see.

As a school we have long prided ourselves on our sense of inclusion for all community members no matter their gender, background, family structure or learning needs. Prior to our involvement in Respectful Relationships Education (RRE), our approach was predominantly that everyone was welcome and we didn’t make a fuss.

Upon our involvement with RRE, we realised that this approach was not enough. Whilst we were creating what we thought of as a safe space, schools are a microcosm of society and without an explicit and consistent message, we were relying on the individual values of each community member and visitor to be aligned, which we know is not always the case! In addition to this, we found that we were also relying on individual staff members’ knowledge and confidence to promote our message of inclusion. The decision to consciously use a gender lens when examining our school afforded us the opportunity to actively disrupt the constructions of gender and break the cycle within our school as well as within our own practices.

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The problematics of ‘gender lenses’ emerge when this balance encounters another world view, and these orders of continuity are contested and re-assembled according to power relations of individuals, rather than a collective and cosmological overarch. Western world views and social organisation means that knowledge, roles, responsibilities and practices are situated within unequal power relations, rather than a more balanced, ‘bigger’ perspective. The traversal between this often emptying Western architecture on the one hand and Indigenous cosmology based upon sets of relationships and overall balance is very fraught terrain. Sometimes it is a collision at an individual level to bridge two kinds of world views and different kinds of knowledge.

**Gabrielle Fletcher, researcher**

My name is Gabrielle Fletcher and I am a descendent of the Dharabulah (Therabulat) clan of the Gundungurra nation from the Blue Mountains of New South Wales, Australia. I am an Associate Professor of Indigenous Studies. As an Indigenous person, the ‘lens’ of marginalisation has been applied all of my life, and the navigation of this imposition a constant repetition and struggle.

For Australian Indigenous Peoples, Knowledge is held collectively and is situated. This means it is based within where you come from. There are distinct language groups (nations and clans) throughout Australia, and knowledge is particular to that area. There are clear rules relating who is meant to hold certain Knowledges and who is not. And this is organised around roles, practices, responsibilities and obligations that preserve, maintain and invest ongoing vibrancy across a broad range of domains, and often these are ‘gender’ based. These rules are laid down in the Dreaming, which is the ‘blueprint’ of life that encompasses the past, present and future. It is therefore about sense-making according to cultural logic that is geared towards continuity, and is dependent upon relationships and relationality; that is, the sets of relationships between all things, including Country (which is the land, waterways, airways and everything in it). It is about maintaining balance and ‘whole’ Knowledge is not made at an individual level, but rather is made whole with everything balanced and relating to everything else. Thus whole knowledge is constantly held, although not always visible or articulated, but our cosmology, or world view, ensures this is so. For me as an Aboriginal woman, then, a gender lens is more of a moving but coherent set of relations, articulated, but our cosmology, or world view, ensures this is so. For me as an Aboriginal woman, then, a gender lens is about examining the culture, practices and environment of our school, exploring how the constructions of gender are enacted by and influence our students, staff and families and engaging our whole community to challenge what they see.

**Hannah Reid, school principal**

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Therefore, our new understanding of a gender lens is about examining the culture, practices and environment of our school, exploring how the constructions of gender are enacted by and influence our students, staff and families and engaging our whole community to challenge what they see.

**Garth Stahl, researcher**

For those of us researching gender identities, 2018 felt like a year of significant change. International discussions of toxic masculinity, a topic of much contestation, became a galvanising force. The American Psychological Association for the first time introduced guidelines for therapists warning that extreme forms of certain “traditional” masculine traits (eg. laddishness, misogyny) can result in negative health outcomes. Whether conservative, progressive or liberal, everyone appeared to have a point of view on the root causes of toxic masculinity as well as the extent of its effects and how best to combat it. As a cisgender male who researches masculinities, I felt compelled more than ever to reflect on my own shifting gender lens—how I see, feel and discern gender relations and stereotypes. While I always try to consider how the current climate informs my gender lens, given the events of 2018, I feel a renewed reflexivity informing how I perform and embody my gender when meeting with participants. Perhaps exacerbated by the ‘temper of the times,’ I am aware of the generational divide between me and the young men I research foregrounding the ways in which a gender lens is tied to a historic sensibility.
INTRODUCTION

Deb Ollis has had a long and distinguished career and made an immeasurable contribution to the work of sexuality, consent and respectful relationships education in Australia. It is timely to reprint her story because governments and schools in Australia are moving into this work with more energy and support than ever before, and there is so much to understand about the historical and political background and context of this work, the need to move beyond a gender lens and a prescribed curriculum, to a whole school approach driven by feminist research, pedagogy and leadership—‘the union of theory and practice’ (bell hooks).

M aria Delaney

THE BEST AND THE WORST: A REFLECTION ON A CAREER AS A FEMINIST EDUCATOR

Introduction

Feminist education—the feminist classroom is—and should be a place where there is a sense of struggle, where there is visible acknowledgement of the union of the theory and the practice, were we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have come much the norm.

bell hooks 1989: 49

For the past 40 years being a feminist educator has been at the core of my life, my work and my identity. bell hook’s focus on ‘the union of theory and practice’ describes the philosophy and practice that has guided this work. I started my teaching degree in 1985 as a strong, some would call, outspoken, aggressive feminist. I was first in family to go to University and hence had no cultural capital to draw upon. I wanted to be a Physical Education (PE) teacher, a not uncommon aspiration for a working-class girl who was good at sport. However, although my parents were immensely proud that I wanted to be a teacher, they both worked two jobs and had no knowledge of how to support my education. Hence, I didn’t work hard enough, and didn’t get the marks to get into the course I wanted. After starting an Arts degree, and feeling out of place, I decided to gain my financial independence by working. Still wanting to pursue PE as a career, I applied to study Home Economics (HE) as a pathway that would enable me to study a minor in PE. After commencing the program, I was soon admitted to the full PE degree.

So, I embarked on the unique and contested combination of HE and PE, majoring in Health Education. I had little understanding of HE, but was drawn to the sociology and nutrition studies it offered. I didn’t realise that when I graduated, I would have to teach Year 7 students to make traffic-light sandwiches! At the time I was moving between two campuses. On one campus I was referred to as a ‘scone cutter’ at the other campus ‘a jock’. One campus was a 19th century mansion that was used many years earlier to train girls in domestic service and, from the stories

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I have heard from my older colleagues, they also received very good tuition in cooking and cleaning. The other campus was a 1960s teachers’ college equipped with student café, student union, drugs, alcohol, men and mirrors in the gym so you could watch yourself and others do weight training. The discourses that underpinned the content of the courses and the pedagogies used to instruct in these areas were as diverse as the students who were studying each discipline. However, what began to develop during these years, that would morph and change throughout my career, was my unfaulting feminism, a ‘gender lens’ and my commitment to gender equality or ‘gender justice’ as my colleague Amanda Keddie calls it (2005). My feminist framework or feminist ‘assemblage’ to use the words of Rose (2000) has been shaped, contested, contradicted and has impacted on my feminist pedagogy. Rose (2000: 322) captures my journey when she says it’s ‘…a hesitant, incomplete, fragmentary, contradictory and contested metamorphosis, [characterised by] the abandonment of some old themes, the maintenance of others, the introduction of some new elements, a shift in the role and functioning of others because of their changed places and connections with the ‘assemblage’ of control.’

When I was at university, I had a passion and hunger to study feminism, but this remained difficult with the ‘scientific’ positivist content that dominated PE and aspects of HE. I was never quite comfortable with the unitary nature of the knowledge that was presented as truth. There appeared to be no place for the contestation and contradictory reality of my life and experience in tertiary education. However, this did not discourage my pursuit of feminist studies and gender equity. Every assignment completed focused in some way on feminist concerns and issues. For example, I researched the motor development of girls in a local primary school; completed an independent academic study on the time women spent in housework; focused on women’s drug use and abortion procedures in health, and developed units of work in many courses that was a gender analysis of the content, one of which was published. Perhaps, the thing I remember most was learning about the pelvic floor in anatomy and being incensed that such an important muscle for women’s health was not being covered in school health education. Hence, the first lesson I gave to the girls in PE when I started teaching, was how to do pelvic floor exercises. Although I did carve out a way to pursue my passion for some form of women’s studies during my undergraduate degree, a gender analysis was overall conspicuous by its absence in my education degree. In 1985, armed with my feminist ideals, hairy legs and armpits, and what I now understand as my feminist pedagogy, I began my career as a PE, HE and Health teacher in a secondary school in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Feminist pedagogy

Larson (2006:2) amongst others [4; 14; 6; 13] argues that ‘feminist pedagogy is an essential tool both to deconstruct and to make meaning of the current manifestations of inequality’ such as gender-based violence and is ‘necessary for creating a liberatory consciousness amongst students’. For Bostow (2015) and her colleagues, ‘feminist pedagogy is not a toolbox, a collection of strategies, a list of practices, or a specific classroom arrangement. It is an overarching philosophy—a theory of teaching and learning that integrates feminist values with related theories and research on teaching and learning’. Based on the principles of Paulo Freire’s (1968) critical pedagogy, in the classroom it has been argued that feminist pedagogy means resisting hierarchies so that student and teacher work together both in planning and delivery; using student experience as a resource, not just traditional pedagogical methodologies, and transforming learning to set new directions for teacher and student to bring about change [11].

According to Emile Lawrence (2016) definitions of feminist pedagogy vary widely, but there is common agreement on these three key tenets:

Resisting hierarchy: In the learning environment, the teacher figure and students work against the creation of a hierarchy of authority between teacher and student; the students also deliver ‘content’ and influence the design of the class.

Using experience as a resource: As well as using traditional sources of information, such as academic journals and books, the students’ and teachers’ own experiences are used as ‘learning materials’. The purpose of using experience as a resource is twofold: firstly, experiences which have not been documented in academic work are brought into discussion, and secondly the class participants experience transformative learning.

Transformative learning: Feminist pedagogy aims for the class participants (students and teachers) not just to acquire new knowledge, but for their thinking to shift in new directions. This may involve the realisation that personal interpretations of experience or of social phenomena can be re-read and validated in new, critical ways. http://www.genderandeducation.com/issues/feminist-pedagogy/.

In my early career, my feminist pedagogy was in many ways unconscious and a result of a commitment to the education of girls. I had never come across the phrase ‘feminist pedagogies’ in my undergraduate degree. According to the three tenets in Lawrence’s (2016) summary, during my time as a teacher, introducing a negotiated curriculum in PE to enable the girls to participate in non-traditional activities such as dance, walking and self-defence, was an example of feminist pedagogy because it resisted hierarchies and engaged students in both the planning and delivery of the PE curriculum. Moreover, she would also argue that perhaps, surveying all my students...
about what they wanted to learn in relationships education was another example of feminist pedagogy for it reflected using ‘student experience as a resource’ to develop the curriculum. At the time I was conscious of trying to transform learning, but was not aware that by taking a critical gender lens to teaching and learning sexualities, sexual pleasure and sexual consent, I was engaging the students in feminist pedagogical approaches. In the parlance of feminist pedagogy, this was ‘transforming learning’ and ‘creating a liberatory consciousness’ amongst students. These are but a few examples of my feminist pedagogy as an early career teacher. I will return to Lawrence’s three tenets to reflect on one of the highlights of my feminist pedagogical journey later in the paper.

Assemblages of feminist pedagogies

In the early 1990s I was seconded to the Education Department to write policy and curriculum in health, sexuality education and violence against women, or what we have come to refer to as Respectful Relationships Education (Our Watch, 2015).

Rose’s (2000) description of assemblage is again useful to draw together and make sense of the continued contradictory and contested metamorphosis; that was taking place during this time and into the future. The impact of higher education was also instrumental in this metamorphosis and provided the gender and women’s study opportunities I still crave. I completed a Master of Education Degree in the early 1990s, which consisted of the units, Gender, Education and Social Theory and the History of Women’s Education, plus a thesis examining the feminist underpinnings of curriculum resource designed to help students make sense of violent and abuse relationships. In 2007 I completed a PhD that focused on inclusive pedagogical practice in gender and sexuality. Not surprisingly, these educational experiences impacted on the feminist pedagogy that I subsequently imbedded in policy and practice for the next 20 years (see for example Standing Strong 1989; Talking Sexual Health 1991, 2001; Catching On 2004, 2014; Sexuality Education Matters 2013; Stepping Out Against Gender Based Violence 2016).

Some themes I have ‘abandoned’ and new ones ‘have emerged’ as Rose (2000) would expect, impacted on by the rich, rewarding and sometimes challenging research and practice landscape of schools, teachers, parents, young people, research colleagues and students. The feminist backlash, contradictions, lack of change in gender equity, particularly the nature and extent of gender-based violence, and what feels like little impact, has at times been disheartening. I recently wrote in a book chapter that, as a high-profile feminist researcher and program developer in sexuality education, I and others in the field have had to develop thick skins and keep focused on the purpose of our work, which is improving the gendered and sexual lives of young people. Being accused of ‘having an agenda,’ ‘socially engineering gender,’ ‘being a man hater,’ ‘corrupting the innocence of children,’ ‘promoting sexual promiscuity’, ‘recruiting children to homosexual lifestyles’ and encouraging ‘aberrant sexual practices that are pornographic’ are but a few of the comments directed at me for the program/resource/intervention development, translated from gender and sexuality research (15 forthcoming).

For the most part I have spent the last 40 years supported in using my own and others’ research in gender and sexuality to develop teaching and professional development resources for school-based sexuality and relationships education and teacher education utilising feminist pedagogy. Abuse and reputational damage are a recent challenge to this work. But at the core of my work has remained my feminist pedagogy—my ‘overarching philosophy,’ my ‘theory of teaching and learning that integrates feminist values with related theories and research on teaching and learning’[1].

Celebrating feminist pedagogy—Unite, Empower and Disrupt

All is not bleak and just when you question why you do this work, an example emerges to give you hope and inspiration. Over the past two years my colleague Leanne Coll and I have developed an ongoing research and activism relationship with Fitzroy High School Feminist collective, a model example of Lawrence’s three tenets of feminist pedagogy in action. This project developed out of an ARC Linkage project researching what and how young people want to learn about sexuality education [see 8].

Recently, most of our engagement with the Fitzroy High School the FemCo, and their inspirational teacher Briony O’Keeffe, has been as adult allies, to help the students plan and lead the first student-developed and led feminist conference in Australia. The work of Fitzroy FemCo is not new. Over the past six years they have developed a range of award-winning feminist resources on everyday sexism and violence against women under the leadership, passion and direction of their feminist pedagogue, Briony O’Keeffe. She has also felt the media scrutiny for her innovative feminist approaches. (See http://fhsfemco.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/FHS_ FIGHTBACK_v0615-2.pdf). In 2017 the FemCo developed a teaching and learning module on rape culture that the students taught to Year 7 and 8 students.

Over the past 18 months Leanne and I have spent a great deal of time in the classroom and this learning environment is a model of feminist pedagogy, according to the summary provided in Lawrence’s three tenets. It is a collective, there is no hierarchy, the class is democratic, students set the direction, students deliver content. In the words of one of the students, FemCo, it’s not student-run but it’s also not teacher-run - it’s
facilitated obviously by [...] but what I love about it - I don't really know if this is part of the question - it gives people who like to talk kind of take control - not take control, but you know - be a bit of a leader in yourself - kind of facilitated conversation. You're kind of able to do that about something you're quite passionate in.

The teacher, Briony is a member of the collective, she is not viewed in a traditional sense. The students sit around a table, the learning is transformative. Gemma gives an example of the way this works in practice.

…we started having rants and actually talking about it, it's just the most incredible feeling - because I think, until that point, you almost never get the experience of just being able to say the things that you're feeling and you're thinking and not be judged for that - and be supported for that.

(Gemma Year 10 past student)

Projects such as the conference are important to the students because activism builds the sort of liberation that Lawrence refers to, and is at the heart of feminist pedagogy according to Hooks (1968). FemCo members wanted to be activists. Alex, another past student explains the importance of this approach.

Big projects we work on something big and not just something you do one assessment for each term. You work on something big that could actually have a difference and make a difference.

RMIT University hosted the Fitzroy High School, Your Voice: A conference designed to Unite, Empower, and Disrupt on 22 February 2019 with the help of an RMIT feminist colleague, Emily Gray. It was 18 months in the planning and the outcome was uplifting and inspirational. Approximately 300 young feminists from secondary schools across Victoria attended. It included a keynote by Clementine Ford in Story Hall, home to the suffragettes, three panels, nine workshops and a music finale. Issues covered feminism as a person of colour, leadership, queering, self-defence, sexuality, body positivity, mindfulness, toxic masculinity, setting up a FemCo, activism and a musical performance by a young feminist singer song writer.

The work of Fitzroy High School’s FemCo fills me, a feminist nearing the end of my career, with a sense of hope and excitement. Feminist pedagogy is alive and well. These young feminists are not shying away from feminism. Rather, they are embracing it with gusto in ways that Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) called for, as Intersectional Feminists. The 14- and 15-year old students developed a statement of commitment for the Your Voice Conference that is indicative of a deep connection with Lawrence's tenets of feminist pedagogy and Crenshaw's call for intersectionality. They actively resist hierarchy, use experience of less privileged presenters and overall aim to transform. It reads:

“*We make a commitment to implementing a ratio across our conference program that recognises the critical importance of intersectional feminism. Our specific commitment is that for every privileged presenter we engage to participate in the conference (in this context primarily CIS, white, heterosexual able-bodied woman) we will also engage an equal number of less privileged, marginalised presenters to contribute to the conference program. The adage ‘if you can see it you can be it’ underpins the experience we want the delegates at our conference to have. We also commit to regularly assessing the make-up of each session at the conference against the intentions set out in this document, and to amend our program as required.”*
If this isn’t evidence of young people embracing feminist pedagogy in the context of a hostile political environment, I am not sure what else they could do. **Bravo!**

**References**


I wish they were like you: reflections of a student from a refugee background

by Ali Hazara and Karen Dunwoodie | December 2019, Vol. 28, No. 2

INTRODUCTION

In the Redress issue, ‘Refugee Education,’ there were many compelling stories of refugee students in Australia. The story of Ali Hazara I found particularly memorable. He describes what it is like for refugees to ‘live in limbo’ on a precarious visa. Ali states that it’s like sitting for an exam but having to wait eight years to get your result. You go to bed every night waiting for the nightmares to start, and every day the anxiety resurfaces as the ‘exam’ has not even been marked and my result has not been released. In the paragraph below Ali has provided an update to his story.

Lesley McFarlane AM

My journey is still in progress, with its ups and downs. I have now graduated from university and work in a law firm as a lawyer and still trying to discover the pathway I was destined to travel. The journey ahead, in other words my future, is unknown and challenging, because I am still waiting for my refugee protection visa to be granted. It has been a long nine years. The new government has committed to giving all temporary visa holders full protection, so I continue to play the waiting game. However, I must push forward, no matter the unknown or the impact ongoing liminality has on me or those whom I love. Like Mr Anderson, I want to become someone’s hope someday and feel brave enough to say, ‘I wish they were like you.’

About the Authors

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It was unexpected when my high school Business Management teacher, Mr Anderson, told me that he wished his students were like me.

I was surprised by his comment because I was not a top student and I always prayed that no child anywhere in the world would ever have to be like me. Being like me means waiting outside the school gate every day to see others getting picked up by their families, and yearning to see someone waiting for me at the end of a long day. Being like me means walking back to an empty bedroom knowing that no one is waiting for you, and that there is no one to ask you how was your school day or to tell you how proud they were that you got 85% for your English essay.

Instead I would take this time to think about what food I had in the cupboard, what concoction I could conjure up for my dinner and whether I could just get one more Days’ wear out of my school shirt before I needed to do a load of washing, and who could I trust to ask about all those huge decisions that are so important in a 17-year old boy’s life, like how to shave without cutting myself. So my teacher’s praise actually saddened me. I never ever want anyone to be like me because I was born into a world where I was deprived of everything a child needs to survive the game of life. I was born a criminal without committing any crime, except that I was a Hazara.

Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs): The global and Australian context

The most recent figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [13] indicate there are over 70 million displaced people globally. Approximately 26 million are registered with the UNHCR as refugees, and almost 52% are under the age of 18 years. This is an alarming figure to comprehend, especially when we stop to consider where these children are, what support they have and what their future holds for.
them. In fact, we can really only account for a small percentage of these children. For example, in Sweden unaccompanied minors (UAMs) applying for asylum reached an unpredicted high in 2015, with more than 35,000 new cases [3]. Worryingly, Europol estimated that at least 10,000 UAMs had gone missing from shelters or receptions centres across Europe [11].

The plight of this growing number of displaced people, especially unaccompanied minors, has prompted the UNHCR to reconsider the notion that the primary duty of a nation in a refugee crisis is to deliver aid rather than assist restore the independence and build the capacity of those affected. The recent report commissioned by the UNHCR (2019) titled Refugee Education 2030 highlights that globally only 35% of school age refugees have access to primary school programs, only 65% of refugees have access to secondary education and as little as 3% are enrolled in tertiary education compared to 37% of non-refugee students globally.

If we now consider the Australian experience, between 2008 and 2014, 4,750 UAMs arrived in Australia seeking asylum. Upon arrival all were detained in onshore detention centres at various locations across Australia [7]. Once released from detention, the children were placed in community houses run by a specific support agency contracted by the Australian Government.

Upon arrival in Australia one of the key issues confronting UAMs is the fact that many do not know their birth dates according to Western traditions or carry papers. Therefore, age assessment conducted by authorities would often result in most UAMs being allocated a birthdate of 31st December. Moreover, this estimated age assessment determined the services that young people are entitled to. For example, once they reach 18 years, UAMs are considered adults and no longer eligible to reside in community housing with carers. Additionally, for those on a bridging visa or temporary protection visa, turning 18 also means they are not eligible to access Commonwealth funded places at tertiary institutions. Although UAMs are still able access English language and public schools, turning 18 was something many are fearful of.

To ensure those who were in secondary education could remain there, some state governments such as the Victorian government, changed their policy to allow UAMs to continue secondary schooling once they turned 18. This change was significant. It meant that UAMs could wear the same uniform and sit in the same classroom as all their peers. However, education beyond secondary school was a distant dream. Due to their temporary status, all people on temporary protection or bridging visas are still classified as international students and are required to pay full international fees.

The Australian approach to education for refugees and those seeking asylum varies considerably. For those arriving under our humanitarian migration, access to education and support services are somewhat generous. These include free public education, schools for young arrivals, English language classes for adults and pathways to further studies such as higher education. These policies are sensible and are core components of any refugee resettlement process. Yet they are still not afforded to those who do not have permanent protection or citizenship.

Major challenges for UAMs

Making Australia home still remains a dream for many young refugees who came to our shores as unaccompanied minors, especially for those who arrived by boat after July 2013, because they have been informed by the Australian Government that they will never be permanently resettled in Australia, regardless of whether or not they are found to be refugees [1].

1 An unaccompanied minor is a child who is under the age of eighteen years, unless, under the law applicable to the child, and who is “separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so.” [12, p. 121].

2 Humanitarian migration program is a dedicated Humanitarian Program that offers resettlement for refugees and others overseas who are in humanitarian need, and protection for people who arrive lawfully in Australia and engage Australia’s protection obligations. In 2017-18, there were 14,825 resettlement places granted under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program (the Humanitarian Program) (8).
Instead the Australian government has provided three kinds of visas for those who came by boat and are claiming asylum. These are bridging visas, temporary protection visas (TPVs), and safe haven enterprise visas (SHEVs). All these visa types in most instances, unless specified, provide work and study rights. The conditions surrounding each visa type vary. The TPV is valid for three years whilst the SHEV is valid for five years. Importantly, the SHEV holder can potentially apply for certain visas if for a total of 42 months (3.5 years) they move to a SHEV designated regional area [2] to work or study fulltime without receiving any social security or special benefits payment. These SHEV provisions are particularly concerning for those UAMs who are currently enrolled at metropolitan higher education institutions across Australia.

UAMs who are now young adults face a myriad of challenges and often describe having little or no control over their future.

- **Access to higher education:** All UAMs who remain on bridging visas, TPVs and SHEVs are not entitled to Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP) funded by the Higher Education Contributions Scheme (HECS), Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) or FEE-HELP, the Federal Government’s student loan scheme. However, for a limited few, access to Australian universities has been achieved with the aid of full-fee scholarships offered by many universities across the country that cover the full tuition fee.

- **Financial hardship:** Although all UAMs have a small chance of receiving a scholarship to go to university, TAFE or VET, there still remains a key obstacle in successfully completing their qualification—that is, how they financially support themselves once they enrol. To further explain, any person on a bridging visa, TPV or SHEV who is a full-time student is not entitled to any Federal Government welfare assistance, including Austudy or Youth allowance. This means that all holders of such visas who successfully make their way to tertiary study are left with two choices:
  a. to study full time and work two to three days per week to pay for their living expenses; or
  b. to leave their study and work in order to survive.

- **Prior learning and experiences of tertiary education:** Unfortunately, in the majority of cases tertiary institutions do not recognise prior learning or work experience of people from a refugee background. Furthermore, for refugees and people seeking asylum, disrupted education and the high incidence of post-traumatic stress (due to mandatory detention) place added pressures on these students [6; 9].

- **Family reunion and uncertainty:** The stress of leaving one’s family behind in war-torn regions of the world often leads these young adults to believe they have done something wrong by surviving, whilst others did not. This is commonly referred to as ‘survivor guilt’ or survivor syndrome [5, p.223]. This stress, in conjunction with living alone, working long hours to meet their financial needs, and living with the fear of no permanent protection, adds a whole new complexity to their already precarious situation. Furthermore, UAMs who arrived after August 2012 are denied the right to sponsor their families under the Special Humanitarian Programme [10]. As a consequence the majority of UAMs have not seen their families since leaving their home country.

- **Selecting courses:** Our experiences and research tells us that the majority of UAMs find it hard to navigate their way through secondary study, let alone know where to start with making their way through the myriad of tertiary institutions and courses available. We acknowledge that the successful journey of a refugee or asylum-seeking student significantly depends on how well careers counsellors, staff and tertiary institutions themselves recognise the distinct needs of those who arrive in Australia as UAMs.

We should reconsider our approach

We believe that the UAMs who came to our shores are not a liability, rather they are assets. They are children and young adults who are our future. Research shows that refugee and asylum seeking background children ‘do well at university given the right support’ [6, p.1311]. Furthermore, we know that a supportive environment and education for UAMs can produce better settlement outcomes, thereby increasing the individual’s potential to contribute to Australia’s socioeconomic advancement.

From a minor to an adult

*Coming back to Mr Anderson’s comment, can you think of any other reason that I preferred my class mates not to be like me? I believe there is a good reason. To be like me comes with the heavy baggage of living in limbo. I remember the joy or sometimes the disappointment on my classmate’s faces after our teacher would release the assignment marks. No matter the outcome, we all deserved the right to know about our performance. In fact, the*
outcome of the assignment was a key to knowing our strengths and challenges and helped us plan accordingly for the future. On the other hand, just imagine that you have sat an exam that will determine your future but you must wait eight years to get your result. You go to bed every night waiting for the nightmares to start, and every day the anxiety resurfaces as the ‘exam’ has not even been marked and my result has not been released. This is exactly the life I wish none of my class mates to ever have to experience. Such a life makes you a stranger to hope, commitment, and personal development. Instead of developing a positive attitude towards life and appreciating all its blessings, you wake up every morning with a mountain of negative thoughts thinking how you could possibly get through another day alone?

I carry this mountain on my back every day. It is a constant reminder of my precarious position and it scares me, as I hide amongst its crevices. This mountain has no certainty and no answer to the questions of whether I will ever pass the ‘exam’ of making Australia a permanent home. It is a mountain of fear that I may get deported any day, and once again I will have to start my life from ground zero. But most importantly, it is a mountain of pain that any child would feel being separated from his mother, and knowing they are missing the beautiful precious moments of watching younger siblings grow.

This was never meant to be a sad story, because so far, for someone so young, I have had a remarkable life journey. The process of writing this article and reflecting on Mr Anderson’s statement of wanting everyone ‘to be like me’, has made me realise the actual meaning behind his words. Mr Anderson taught me a significant lesson that day: it is not about all the difficulties in life that matter, but the defiance and strength that enable you to fight back. Mr Anderson saw something in me that I had not seen in myself and that was a love for life, a dogged resilience, and a commitment to survive. He chose to have faith in me despite knowing that I was a student from an English language school with little chance to withstand the challenges of a tough outer suburban secondary school. When I felt hopeless, he gave me hope and when I felt I could no longer move forward he gave me a gentle nudge. He kept my passion for learning alive and believed in me. My relationship with Mr Anderson always reminds me of my favourite childhood lesson where I was taught that ‘our parents bring us down from the sky to earth, but our teacher makes us rise and touch the sky.’ I do not have my family, but my school community and my teachers have become my family.

The purpose of writing this article was to share with you my experience and to thank my teachers, who are the reason I am where I am today, studying an arts/law degree at university. Your contribution is the reason for the success and prosperity of this country. Like Mr Anderson, you have made this world a better place by sharing your wisdom and helping thousands of young people live their dreams. Finally, I want to thank you for giving me a voice and thank you for every word and act of kindness that has ensured a student can believe in their ability to overcome even a seemingly insurmountable challenge, because you never know how, like Mr Anderson, when a simple act may change the direction of someone’s life.

In conclusion, le Carre (n.d.) once told us that ‘sitting behind a desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world’. We know from having had the privilege to meet, befriend and work alongside many UAMs here in Australia that many systems and institutions are nowhere near perfect, but we have to keep trying. In decades to come, they will have many questions to ask our generation about how we let this crisis of responsibility for the many UAMs globally happen on our watch. We owe it to all these children and young adults to do better from here on.

References


THE SUSTAINABILITY CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITY

INTRODUCTION

In each edition of *Redress*, AWE includes articles on the theme of the edition that pertain directly to the curriculum so as to provide timely, useful, well-researched and contemporary resources for teachers. In a recent issue of *Redress*, Angela Colliver, who is a prolific developer of resources for schools, wrote an excellent article on the cross-curriculum priority of Sustainability.

In her paper, Angela Colliver describes how teachers might integrate education for sustainability into any and all learning areas. She applies ‘Systems Thinking’ to help students understand the complex relationships among the economic, political and legal systems of national and international governance and how these systems can help or hamper a community’s attempts to plan for and enact ecologically sustainable practices. She demonstrates that systems thinking enables students to make conceptual links that assist them to organise their ideas and recognise the need for coordinated and layered thinking and action.

With the growth of a deeper sense of urgency around societal understanding of climate change and sustainability, there is, now, a greater imperative to put the environment at the centre of the curriculum.

ALOTA LIMA

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Introduction

At the Rio Earth summit conference in 2012, the world’s governments affirmed their commitment to an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable planetary future. However, in relation to such phenomena as species loss, deforestation, climate change, carbon emissions, ice-sheet melt, and water quality and shortages, there is still insufficient global action and attention to these critical issues [23; World Wildlife Fund, 2014]. There is a widespread recognition that education and curriculum policies have a key role to play in engaging mind-sets, shifting dispositions, and enhancing young peoples’ abilities both to acknowledge contemporary problems and to develop and apply their knowledge and skills in remediating unsustainable practices in the future [34; 38]. Yet the mainstreaming of this imperative area remains marginal [40; 27]. A holistic, focused and joined-up approach to teaching and learning in the area of sustainability is recommended in the research literature—indeed it is seen as vital and urgent [34].

There are strong reasons that there is a need for education for sustainability (EfS) to be explicitly taught in schools. Through EfS, education has the potential to promote global ecological awareness, a more socially-just future and informed citizen action.

In Australia, the Climate Council’s (2014) synthesis of research showed Australia’s largest population centres are at increased risk from extreme weather events such as flooding and bushfires which will have long-term impacts on people, property, communities, and environments. Environmental questions have been especially high on Australian political agendas in the past decade. There has been much confusion and unresolved public policy in the inevitable transition to low-carbon futures. Heated political debates dubbed the ‘Energy Wars’ continue on renewable energy targets; urban transportation investment; governmental protections for World Heritage Areas, the policy implications of climate change, the pros and cons of a carbon tax.

Our future depends on Australians understanding and trusting climate science and developing a deeper understanding of issues such as alternative energy sources, declining biodiversity, international strategies to limit global warming, and sustainable consumption [36]. Teaching EfS makes sense. It equips our society for the complex and interconnected challenges emerging now and in the future. This was recognised in Environmental Education for a Sustainable Future: National Action Plan (Environment Australia, 2000) and Living Sustainably: the Australian Government’s National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability (DEWHA, 2009). EfS is interdisciplinary and inclusive. It is more than a narrow ‘green’ focus on ecology and the protection of nature and enables us to focus on social justice and “the pedagogies of humans as agents for change” (Elliott & Davis, 2009, p.67).

The practical challenge for teachers is how to teach EfS and where to find it in the Australian Curriculum. This paper
identifies for teachers how to integrate teaching EFS through any and all learning areas. It provides a brief review of the relevant policy context and an acknowledgement of implementation challenges, before going on to outline a shared conceptualisation of EFS and to exemplify some case studies of school and community-based sustainability practices.

Curriculum and Policy context

Australia has been part of international endeavours in EFS since the field’s inception, with a range of policies, programmes, and resources being put in place over the years [see 39, for examples]. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008) established the policy goal by which Australia embraced EFS. It was a policy-setting that strongly supported the centrality of EFS in Australian students’ education. This was envisioned as the education of young people to become environmental citizens who “work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments’. The Melbourne Declaration also underlined that ‘young Australians should become active and informed citizens who are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia’s civic life as well as be responsible global and local citizens” [29, p.9].

During the first year of the United Nations Decade in Education for Sustainable Development the Department of the Environment and Heritage [DEH], released A National Environmental Education Statement for Australian Schools [15]. This document’s intent was to provide a nationally agreed description of the nature and purpose of EFS. The five components of EFS identified within this statement were: Envisioning a better future, critical thinking, and reflection; participation; partnerships for change; and systems thinking [8, p.3]. Of the five components, ‘Systems thinking’ may require stronger emphasis with teachers and might usefully be embraced in the context of helping students to understand the nature of economic, political, and legal systems of national and international governance. Socio-ecological systems thinking is a central component of the Sustainability cross-curricular priority. ‘Systems thinking’ enables conceptual linkages to be made across the components and organising ideas and recognises the need for co-ordinated and layered thinking, and responses that are “appropriate to the volatile, densely interconnected and dangerously vulnerable world that we have created” [35, p. 64].

In 2012 the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) integrated the Sustainability Cross-Curriculum Priority (SCCP) in the Australian Curriculum bringing these ideas together in this statement:

“Education for sustainability develops the knowledge, skills, values and world views necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living…. Sustainability education is futures-oriented, focusing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. Actions that support more sustainable patterns of living require consideration of environmental, social, cultural and economic systems and their interdependence” (v7.2, unpaginated).

The Sustainability Cross-Curriculum Priority (SCCP) was developed around three key concepts: systems, world views, and futures. These concepts are seen as the fundamental building blocks to learning about sustainability. Each key concept contains organising ideas that provide a scaffold for developing related knowledge, understanding and skills. These are embedded in each learning area as well as the General Capabilities. An organising idea may draw on content from more than one learning area.

“Systems”, the first key concept explores the interdependent and dynamic nature of systems that support all life on Earth as well as the promotion of healthy social, economic, and ecological patterns of living for our collective wellbeing and survival.

“Worldviews”, the second key concept presents the issues surrounding sustainability in a global context. This concept allows for a diversity of world views on ecosystems, values, and social justice to be discussed and linked to individual and community actions for sustainability.

“Futures”, the third key concept is aimed at building the capacities for thinking and acting in ways that are necessary to create a more sustainable future. The concept seeks to develop reflective thinking processes and empower young people to design action that will lead to a more equitable, respectful, and sustainable future.

There are nine organising ideas (OIs) in this curricular space formed around three categories:

1. Systems;
2. World Views; and
3. Futures.

These are listed in boxes as follows:
The organising ideas for the Sustainability Cross-Curriculum Priority

**SYSTEMS**

OL.1 The biosphere is a dynamic system providing conditions that sustain life on Earth.

OL.2 All life forms, including human life, are connected through ecosystems on which they depend for their wellbeing and survival.

OL.3 Sustainable patterns of living rely on the interdependence of healthy social, economic and ecological systems.

**WORLD VIEWS**

OL.4 World views that recognise the dependence of living things on healthy ecosystems, and value diversity and social justice are essential for achieving sustainability.

OL.5 World views are formed by experiences at personal, local, national and global levels, and are linked to individual and community actions for sustainability.

**FUTURES**

OL.6 The sustainability of ecological, social and economic systems is achieved through informed individual and community action that values local and global equity and fairness across generations into the future.

OL.7 Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments.

OL.8 Designing action for sustainability requires an evaluation of past practices, the assessment of scientific and technological developments, and balanced judgments based on projected future economic, social and environmental impacts.

OL.9 Sustainable futures result from actions designed to preserve and/or restore the quality and uniqueness of environments.

Learning Area Statements on Sustainability

The Australian Curriculum recognises that EFS is indeed central to learning and is included in each learning area. This section includes examples for educators and shows that there is no reason for schools to hesitate in implementing EFS.

**DESIGN & TECHNOLOGIES**

In the Design and Technologies curriculum, students are supported to become creative and responsive designers. Students consider 'ethical, legal, aesthetic and functional factors and the economic, environmental and social impacts of technological change, and how the choice and use of technologies contributes to a sustainable future, they are developing the knowledge, understanding and skills to become discerning decision-makers'. This learning area contains 32 elaborations that refer to ‘sustainability’.

However, here distinctions are made… distinctions that refer to more than environmental sustainability. “Sustainability education is futures-oriented, focussing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. Actions that support more sustainable patterns of living require consideration of environmental, social, cultural and economic systems and their interdependence.” (ACARA, 2015)

**SCIENCE**

The Science curriculum states: “…the priority of sustainability provides authentic contexts for exploring, investigating, and understanding chemical, biological, physical and Earth and space systems. By investigating the relationship between systems and system components and how systems respond to change, students develop an appreciation for the interconnectedness of Earth’s biosphere, geosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere. In this learning area, students appreciate that science provides the basis for decision-making in many areas of society and that these decisions can impact on the Earth system. (ACARA, 2015)

Additionally, eight elaborations embrace the Sustainability CCP, when classes look at the impact of humans on the earth and another examines the effect of human activity on food chains and food webs, and one examines the role of science in natural resource management.

**VISUAL ARTS**

In the Visual Arts curriculum, students are supported to explore the nature of art making and responding. It enables the exploration of the role of the Arts in maintaining and transforming cultural practices, social systems, and the relationships of people to their environment. Through making and responding in the Arts, students consider issues of sustainability in relation to resource use and traditions in each of the Arts subjects.

The Arts provides opportunities for students to express and develop world views, and to appreciate the need for collaboration within and between communities to implement more sustainable patterns of living. In this learning area, students use the exploratory and creative platform of the Arts to advocate effective action for sustainability.
The English curriculum states, “English assists students to develop the skills necessary to investigate, analyse and communicate ideas and information related to sustainability, and to advocate, generate and evaluate actions for sustainable futures”. This encourages students to look for patterns and seek explanations… these are higher order thinking skills that advance students in the learning about learning. The statement goes on to say “They develop the understanding and skills necessary to act responsibly and create texts that inform and persuade others to take action for sustainable futures”. (ACARA, 2015)

When we look at the references to the Sustainability CCP in Mathematics, we find the Australian Curriculum states that, “In this learning area, students can observe, record and organise data relating to issues of sustainability from secondary sources. They can apply spatial reasoning, measurement, estimation, calculation, and comparison to gauge local ecosystem health and can cost proposed actions for sustainability”. (ACARA, 2015)

In Geography in the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area (HASS), it is stated that “sustainability will allow all young Australians to develop the knowledge, skills, values and world views necessary for them to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living. It will enable individuals and communities to reflect on ways of interpreting and engaging with the world. The Sustainability priority is futures-oriented, focusing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. Actions that support more sustainable patterns of living require consideration of environmental, social, cultural and economic systems and their interdependence”. (ACARA, 2015)
Learning Area Statements on Sustainability

**CIVICS & CITIZENSHIP**
Within the Civics and Citizenship learning area in HASS, it is stated that “the priority of Sustainability can provide a context for developing students’ civics and citizenship knowledge, understanding and skills. In the knowledge and understanding strand, students have the opportunity to explore sustainability issues as they relate to government services and the different levels of government. They develop the understanding that sustaining a resilient democracy depends on the informed participation of its citizens and develop skills and dispositions to support active citizenship. They explore contemporary issues and develop action plans and possible solutions to local, national and global issues which have social, economic and environmental perspectives”. (ACARA, 2015)

**ECONOMICS & BUSINESS**
The Economics and Business learning area in HASS “provides content that supports the development of students’ world views, particularly in relation to judgments about access to and sustainable use of the Earth’s resources, local and global equity and fairness across generations for the long-term wellbeing of our world.

The curriculum prepares students to be informed consumers, to act in enterprising and innovative ways and to perceive business opportunities in changing local, regional, and global economic environments. Students have opportunities to appreciate the need for balancing economic development, environmental sustainability, and society’s obligation to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”. (ACARA, 2015)

**HISTORY**
When we look at the History curriculum in the (HASS) area, it has ten explicit elaborations that embrace sustainability when examining issues such as climate change, national parks, and humankind’s impact on landscapes. It states “The Australian Curriculum: History provides content that supports the development of student’s world views, particularly in relation to judgements about past social and economic systems, and access to and use of the Earth’s resources. It provides opportunities for students to develop an historical perspective of sustainability. Making decisions about sustainability to help share a better future requires an understanding of how the past relates to the present and needs to be informed by historical trends and experiences.

In this learning area students learn about the changes in environments over time, the role played by individuals and communities in protecting environments, the emergence of farming and settled communities, the development of the Industrial Revolution and the growth of population, and the overuse of natural resources and the rise of environmental movements”. (ACARA, 2015)
Sustainability education is future-oriented, focussing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. They develop this understanding through a range of activities including learning in, and about, the outdoors; the creation of spaces for outdoor learning; active outdoor recreation; active transport options; and growing, sourcing and choosing food products. As such, they will gain a capacity to advocate and act for a sustainable future. (ACARA, 2015)

The Health and Physical Education curriculum states that, “Students develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between the health and wellbeing of the individual and the environment. They develop this understanding through a range of activities including learning in, and about, the outdoors; the creation of spaces for outdoor learning; active outdoor recreation; active transport options; and growing, sourcing and choosing food products. As such, they will gain a capacity to advocate and act for a sustainable future.” (ACARA, 2015)

**Practice and implementation challenges**

Although there are positive stories of Australian schools implementing sustainability initiatives [6] the enactment of EfS remains patchy across school systems [31]. The Australian Education for Sustainability Alliance (AESA), in partnership with the Australian Government, completed a large, multi-state research project titled *The State of Education for Sustainability in Australia* (AESA, 2014). About 70% of the responses to the survey were from primary and secondary teachers; the rest were from principals and executive and support staff in schools. Ninety-two percent of the individuals surveyed thought that sustainability education was important, of value to students, and should be integrated into curriculum. However, 80% of the respondents were either unaware of EfS or did not understand what it was. Perhaps not surprisingly, 91% of the same respondents reported they were yet to integrate sustainability into their teaching practices. Moreover, pre-service primary teachers in Australia, although generally keen to use environmental teaching in their future careers, feel under prepared and lacking in confidence to do so [26]. There have been calls for the ‘mainstreaming’ of EfS in Australian pre-service teacher education programmes [33], a clear implication that the area has often been confined to elective backwaters or requires greater attention.

Lead schools within effective Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative [AuSSI] usually demonstrate a well-developed and systematic whole school culture of sustainability [6]. They encourage deep student analysis of how, for example, schools use water, generate energy, think systemically about transport to school, apply bio-diversity principles in their school grounds, or—in relation to purchasing and waste disposal—extend institutional responses well beyond superficial re-cycling and litter-picking initiatives to student action across diverse issues. In terms of culture,
for leading edge schools, EFS can be integral components of—and indeed a driver for—school planning and school improvement [6; 24; 27]. At a community level, schools can be hubs for learning about sustainability and play an integral part within local projects and inter-generational partnerships. And EFS benefits from being the focus of discrete and developed curriculum units and an acknowledgement that superficial cross-curricular treatment rarely makes for high quality learning.

There is thus evidence that schools, teachers, and teacher education have yet to recognise the urgency of EFS imperatives, or indeed the relevant enabling language of the Australian curriculum, including the Geography learning area which directs educators to “develop students as responsible, informed and active citizens who can contribute to the development of an environmentally and economically sustainable and socially just world”[4].

Conclusion
Putting the environment at the centre of the curriculum can have the effect of drawing teachers and students into engaging explorations of place, space and environmental contestation and prompt reflection around the values and eco-dispositions which they might wish to bring to bear upon a particular issue or problem.

The current review of the Australian Curriculum, including the sustainability CCP offers us opportunities and hope that EFS might be more explicitly valued in the next iteration of what schools are expected to teach.

References


INTRODUCTION

In this retrospective issue of Redress, it is very fitting to include Penny Spalding’s historical account of gradual changes in women teachers’ working conditions and economic security over a very long period. These changes were fought for by the teachers’ union but often only after a long campaign by women within the union itself to achieve a policy position which could then be advocated to the employer and government.

Penny has structured her article around ten tips for women for the issues that she addresses. She advises that women should ‘keep an eye on every payslip’ to ensure that their pay is correct and they are receiving the benefits of gains made in Enterprise Agreements. She gives an excellent account of the battle by women unionists over 50+ years to rectify many inequities in superannuation entitlement. Superannuation was set up originally by men for men. Women who married were sacked but the superannuation that they had paid returned NO interest to them - the interest was kept in the fund to benefit men’s retirement! There is still some way to go to overcome the gendered inequities that exist in superannuation. Other issues that Penny addresses which have an impact on economic security for women are pregnancy and return to work, health and sick leave, parental leave, flexible work, domestic and family violence, gendered violence at work, equal pay, and women in decision-making positions.

Penny’s article is inspirational in that it shows that we stand on the shoulders of those activists who came before us, that women have to be forever vigilant and continue the struggle for equality.

LESLEY McFARLANE AM
PENNY SPALDING lives with her family on Quandamooka land and works for the Queensland Teachers’ Union in Meanjin. A mother to two boys, she is passionate about gender equity, social justice, public education and union activism.

Penny started her teaching journey as a visual art teacher in the Wide Bay and has worked in Ipswich and Logan. She became a QTU Rep in her second year of teaching and was keenly involved at branch, area, state and Executive levels. Penny has worked as an Officer of the QTU since 2006, initially as Gold Coast Organiser, and has held her current position, Women’s Officer, since 2012.
In the past 18 months we have seen an encouraging resurgence, with women of all ages taking to the streets to demand equity. Equity in the law, equity in dealing with gendered violence but also equity in working conditions. It is no coincidence that union women are at the heart of the equity movement in Australia, or that we find ourselves finally being led by women, my own union included. And that’s great, because we still have a long road ahead when it comes to achieving employment equity and financial security for most working Australian women—even teachers!

My union, The Queensland Teachers’ Union (QTU), has a long and proud history. Since 1889, the QTU’s members have engaged in debate, policy and campaigns to better the professional and personal lives of members. Across Queensland’s state schools and the TAFE sector, the QTU currently represents approximately 48,000 members, nearly 76 percent of whom are women. We are also a state branch of the federal union, The Australian Education Union (AEU).

When I started my teaching career, I was excited to get my first pay packet. While it had been my dream to become a teacher since primary school, part of the appeal was a secure government job. I had grown up with fluctuating family finances and knew the stability I wanted for myself. As I became involved with the QTU, I slowly started to learn that the economic security of “public servants” wasn’t as clear cut as my conservative upbringing had led me to believe. While the inherent notions of the “model employer” and decent conditions remain, what I did not understand from the outside looking in was the struggle that took place to secure these entitlements and conditions.

Then I joined my Union and went to my first branch meeting. My eyes were opened to this amazing group of people that stood up for public education funding, teacher professionalism and improved conditions. I discovered the wonder and the power that is the union movement. Through my engagement, I learned of, and met, the tenacious feminists and activists who fought the good, and often long, struggle to secure conditions many of us have enjoyed and, to be honest, at times taken for granted.

I have been an official of the QTU since 2006. Below is a little of what I have learned along the way, some key factors that are essential for long-term economic security and a little snapshot of some Queensland union history to illustrate how these were achieved.

Here are my ten top tips for teachers, with a focus on women's conditions and economic security.

1. **RULE #1 READ EACH AND EVERY PAY SLIP.**

Understand your salary step, when your anniversary is, and how your leave is accrued and deducted.

Even though I have been a union officer for many years I am still amazed at the disparity in levels of knowledge about women’s economic security. Long-term financial security relies heavily on understanding your basic entitlements from the outset. Take firm, early (although it’s never too late) control in relation to your superannuation, your salary progression and long service leave (LSL), and ensure that you understand your leave entitlements. Every week I assist teachers who are given incorrect advice at a school or regional level, sometimes with devastating economic impacts.

A standout example of this comes from my time as an organiser. I met a woman on a school visit who queried when she would be eligible for the senior teacher increment (the highest classroom teacher paypoint at the time). On reviewing her payslip, I discovered that, despite teaching for nine years, she was still on a beginning teacher’s salary. Her washing machine had broken down that morning, so the massive backpay was welcomed, but she should have been paid correctly. Mistakes can and do happen. All the time. If you’re not sure, ask your Union!

From the start of 2020, part-time teachers in Queensland have not needed to do the equivalent hours as a full-time teacher to progress on the salary scale so are no longer financially disadvantaged. This was a great win for gender pay equity, as it recognised the experience and annual work still undertaken by part-time teachers, the vast majority of whom are women (90 percent in Queensland). The reduced salary and the additional years needed to meet full-time equivalency for progression represented a long-standing double penalty for those working part time. Importantly, this salary progression has a positive and compounding impact on the superannuation paid as well.

This great win arose out of our last round of enterprise bargaining, for which we had developed a specific gendered log of claims. Get involved, understand your Union’s claims and support collective action for the profession. Since the QTU was registered in 1889, the employer has not offered one pay increase without Union action.
Nowhere is the gender pay gap greater in Australia than in retirement. While teachers may have good super compared to other industries (thanks teacher unions!) there is a very checkered past when it comes to super, and some essential factors to consider.

Since superannuation was established in Queensland, the campaigns, debates, and subsequent legislation focused on the needs of men, following English and Scottish teachers winning superannuation in 1910 [1]. The rates on death and retirement were absent from any information published when the legislation came into effect in 1912. I am ever-grateful to the QTU women who in the early 1980s undertook a sustained grassroots campaign to achieve some degree of equity when it came to our superannuation [2].

According to a Union survey led by the QTU’s Women and Sexism Committee, more than 70 percent of women members were dissatisfied with their super scheme. This was a scheme that required compulsory contributions but excluded females from contributing to the spouses benefit fund. It also required

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**RULE #2**

**DESPITE YOUR NATURAL INSTINCTS, WHICH MIGHT SUGGEST OTHERWISE, DON’T PUT YOUR HEAD IN THE SAND WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR SUPERANNUATION.**
45 years of uninterrupted service in order to access the compounded benefits on retirement [3]. Where service was less than 45 continuous years, a refund was provided of contributions only, with ZERO interest paid on contributions, thus severely eroding the worth of the contribution. Women would literally have been no worse off if they had stuffed their cash under the mattress. If they died, there was no capacity under the scheme for any benefit to be paid to the family or any children, even where the woman was the main breadwinner or was a single parent (let us not forget that, across the nation, the marriage bar meant public servants who were women had to resign on marriage and there was no such thing as parental leave—but more on that later!)

The fight was long and hard—and these legends had to campaign within their own Union and the wider membership to get a Union policy position adopted before they could take up the fight in relation to super benefits. Income protection and protections against the loss of contributions when employment ceased were won in 1986. QSuper was formed in 1990, arising from the Combined Public Sector Unions Superannuation scheme [4]. As QSuper is now merging with Sun Super, we need to ensure we continually look to where the gaps and opportunities are to assist women's long-term security.

In my time, it has become glaringly obvious that engrained systems often have loopholes that only disadvantage women, as they were developed at a time when women in paid work didn’t have access to leave and the other entitlements we have gained along the way. In one contemporary example, in recent years I assisted a member with complex health issues of her own and an infant with a very rare and life-threatening condition. Following her paid parental leave, which included the employer’s paid leave, Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave (CPPL) and her accrued long service leave, she sought to draw on her income protection. While on paid leave from the employer (parental and LSL), she had continued to make superannuation contributions, and hence premiums on her income insurance. However, her claim was rejected by the insurer due to the policy’s fine print, which stated that she was unable to claim because she had not “worked” within the past 12 months. While the employer recognises paid leave as “work” for service accrual and entitlements, the insurer did not. At no time had it ever occurred to any superannuation or union official I spoke to at this time that this meant the insurer was accepting premiums for a policy that they had no capacity to pay under their rules, and this impacted only upon parents on paid leave. A big hats off to the women from QSuper in the product development team who met with the QTU to talk through these issues and create a product for parents. There are many single income families and single parents who believe in good faith they have protection. The fight and need to be ever vigilant continues.

As this edition goes to print, Australian superannuation industry funds, supported by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) are campaigning for superannuation to include paid parental leave. Currently in Queensland, public servants are paid superannuation on their employer’s paid parental scheme, but this is not the case across the nation. No superannuation is currently paid on the Commonwealth paid parental leave scheme. This creates a gap in women’s superannuation in the essential “compounding years”. The gap in super is widened when part-time work is accessed, resulting in even less super being put away for retirement. As a result many teachers take extended unpaid leave as the primary care-giver as there may be a partner who is providing an income. The partner’s income is providing their superannuation and long-term financial security, regardless of what happens to the partnership, while the woman is left with no personal long-term security.

What difference would super make on just those 18 weeks on minimum wage?

According to the Industry SuperFunds Australia (ISA) group, up to 1.45 million mothers have received government-funded parental leave in the past 10 years, sacrificing thousands in retirement savings. ISA’s research revealed that in the 2019-20 financial year alone, 170,860 women missed out on $216.7 million in super payments. A working mother of two would be $14,000 better off in retirement if the government paid super on top of parental leave [5].

The gendered dilemma when it comes to superannuation was glaringly clear in the report from the Senate’s 2016 “Economic Security for Women in Retirement” inquiry, which was given the startling, confronting yet apt title “A husband is not a retirement plan” [6]. It found that, if action is not taken urgently, women currently aged 25-29 will still face a less secure retirement than men of the same age when they retire in 2055.

Super takeaways

• Have you checked your income protection waiting period? Enquire as to the cost of reducing the waiting periods.
• Is there the capacity to provide information about your occupational rating for income protection? This may result in savings to your premiums that can be used to reduce waiting periods.
• Seek independent financial advice in relation to your superannuation.
• Look into voluntary contributions and salary sacrificing. I am very grateful to the wise mentor who early in my career advised me to do this. Without altering my take-home pay, I was able to filter more money into my super early in my career at a time when the compounding contributions would have a significant impact.
Employment security has been an issue in Australia for a long time, but COVID has really highlighted the impact of insecure work and how important provisions such as sick leave and permanency can be. Access to finance, secure accommodation and stability of income are all impacted by a lack of permanent roles for teachers. The QTU fought a long campaign for a conversion to permanency process for teachers and continues to work to improve these conditions. The initial MOA had little detail or protections for women who were pregnant. The inability to access work in school vacations and the timing of pregnancy also means that, even in a feminised profession such as teaching, teachers are not being made job offers because they are pregnant.

In the 2014 Australian Human Rights Commission report, Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review, Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick found that at least one in two parents was still discriminated against at work, either while pregnant or on return to work from parental leave. The report is now eight years old, but as there were 15 years between the previous two reports, nothing more current is available. However, anecdotally in my work, I have no reason to think much has changed.

It is very hard to stand up and challenge the employer when you have employment vulnerability. Unfortunately, sometimes we also inadvertently become victims of our own success. Since we secured the conversion to permanency process, the employer has often delayed permanency offers and relied on the conversion process to make offers, rather than using it as the safety net it was intended to be. Instead of ensuring that women are not employed by the same region on ongoing contracts for 20 years (as was the case on the Gold Coast when I began organising in 2006), it has been adopted as the mainstream path to permanent employment. As a teacher shortage looms, education departments must do better.

It is common for women who are employed to do relief work and who are long-term contract teachers to have their requests for paid parental leave challenged by the employer. Presently, the QTU is seeking the closure of a loophole in the Public Service Commission’s Paid Parental Leave Directive that makes it unclear whether women who have met service eligibility requirements but do both contract and relief work have the capacity to access paid leave. Should they do either type of work exclusively, there would be an entitlement, but not if they do both. There remains important work to be done.

In Queensland, teachers are employed by the state government, via the education department. There are statewide employment conditions. You are paid for your labour, not for your health or your martyrdom. That appears harsh, but frankly, it’s true. We face a wave of teacher burnout under increasingly bureaucratic demands that have taken us far from the heart and soul of teaching. Across the nation, there are issues with workload.

Teachers are not good at saying a professional no, nor are we good at healthy boundaries. By the very nature of a caring profession, we often sacrifice our sleep, our school holidays and our important time with families and friends by being consumed with teaching. It is a job that is never “done”. I’m yet to meet a teacher who “feels on top of it”. And while that is a sad indictment of the profession, your health and wellbeing and relationships should not be sacrificed as a result of your commitment to the employer. Too many times personal sacrifices offered out of goodwill are not recalled, repaid or acknowledged.

We need teachers to access sick leave when they are sick (one of the few good things to arise from the pandemic) and provide work for replacement when you can. A recent case that required Union assistance was triggered by the damage done to a principal and teacher’s relationship when work was not provided for a replacement teacher, resulting in the principal treating it as a “performance” issue and questioning the teacher’s professionalism. It was entirely inappropriate for a principal to demand a teacher provide work for the supply teacher when she was sitting in emergency with a gravely ill child.
Paid parental leave is often referred to as if it is some sort of magically granted right that we should be forever grateful for. So often, women ring the Union and are left feeling almost guilty when they learn of the improved conditions we have achieved for them. However, as with many gendered issues in Australia we are far from being at the top of the international leaderboard when it comes to providing support for families. In fact, we are dismally low. Embarrassingly low. It took years for the federal government’s paid parental leave scheme to come in, only for then Prime Minister Abbott to refer to working mums accessing both their employer’s paid leave and the Commonwealth’s provision as ‘double-dipping’—on Mother’s Day 2015 no less! I remember it vividly, as I was pregnant with my second child at the time. It was outrageous and humiliating. The CPPL had always been intended to complement the paid provision and years on little improvement to this minimum standard has been achieved. It is also not lost on me that the only time I hear “contrived arrangements” in my role as a union official is when it is used by the employer to disparage those pregnant employees who are trying to maximise their leave entitlements. It’s insidious and it’s dangerous. It’s further evidence of the engrained misogyny that exists and judges women for working, and for having children.

Previously referred to as “accouchement leave”, paid parental leave was discussed and debated by the International Labour Organisation as early as 1919 [7], most likely as a result of a shortage of workers following the horrific personal costs of World War I.

In 1979, the ACTU secured access to maternity leave (unpaid) [8], which meant that Australian women no longer had to resign from their employment when they had a child.

In Queensland, teachers fought a long battle to access not only pay equity (see next rule) but also overturn the “marriage bar”. (The “marriage bar” was a common practice from the 19th century across western cultures and was the practice of restricting employment of married women. Married women were prohibited from ongoing employment in clerical and teaching roles and other feminised professions.) In 1966, the QTU called for submissions and proposals as part of a General Wages Claim and included were proposals for equal pay for women and the repeal of legislation requiring women teachers to resign prior to marriage [9]. The claim was arbitrated, resulting in a four-year phasing-in period for scrapping of the requirement to resign and the equal pay being reached at the end of the agreement.

The marriage bar had flow on effects, interrupting service history meaning the loss of accruals such as sick and long service leave, superannuation and seniority which was then a criterion for promotion. Future employment was often insecure and contracts only, meaning the summer vacation was without pay (as historically there was NO summer vacation pay at all for contract teachers).

In 1984, Queensland was recognised nationwide as having some of the least advantageous leave entitlements for teachers. Again, it was determined women in the QTU who took on the fight, many of them rank and file members supporting the Women and Sexism Committee [10]. While the threat of losing your job had gone and leave accruals was an improvement, it was only unpaid leave that was available. Paid parental leave was not available to teachers until 1996.

Despite the QTU’s claim for 12 weeks, only six weeks were provided from July 1996. But it was a start. Sadly, it included any school vacations that fell over the period, and a requirement for teachers to start their leave six weeks prior to the estimated date of confinement meant that there was no real net gain for teachers whose bubs were due over the summer vacation period. Again, as the leave was mostly accessed prior to the birth of the child, there was also no paid leave for time at home with bub after it was born. It also did not cover still birth or the loss of a pregnancy.

Fortunately, QTU women are a tenacious lot, and in 2001 Leah Mertens (QTU Deputy General Secretary and then Women’s Officer) led the claim to make paid parental leave exclusive of school vacation periods. Unlike other forms of leave such as recreation or long service leave, there is no flexibility as to when teachers access their leave (school vacations) nor in the timing of births. This was an important gain, but we remained determined to increase the leave from six to 12 weeks. In 2005, 12 weeks was gained, and in 2008 we secured an increase from 12 weeks to 14 weeks. Importantly, as part of our gender equity claim in the last round of enterprise bargaining, the QTU was successful in arguing that paid leave should be available to either parent, regardless of gender, if they were the primary care giver at the time. This provision was widened to cover the whole public sector.
It is really important that gender equity provisions extend to spouses and recognise families where the parents may be of the same gender, or non-binary or gender fluid. While the shared care leave (long spousal leave) was achieved, no increase to paid leave has been achieved since 2008, despite our claims for 20 weeks. Under our state’s industrial framework, there is currently no provision to provide foster parents of infants with paid parental leave! This clearly needs our attention and action. So, we must continue this work, and look ahead.

RULE #6
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS IN RELATION TO PART-TIME, FLEXIBILITY AND RETURNING TO FULL-TIME!

How often do non-teachers love to emphasise ALL THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS to teachers in social settings. It is tiresome and does not reflect the lack of flexibility that has been afforded to teachers historically. Always travelling or holidaying in peak times, with peak rates and no capacity to be with your own child when they have their first day of school are common experiences. There is also the common chestnut of teachers being denied or needing to jump through hoops when requesting access to part-time, despite it being enshrined as an entitlement on return from parental leave in the Queensland Industrial Relations Act (2016) until such time that the youngest child is of compulsory school age.

After struggling to access a part-time fraction and juggle work and care (on a reduced income and superannuation), the issue that next commonly arises is the capacity to timetable the fraction request and negotiate days. It is important to understand that there is a clear industrial precedent, which ensures that the employer must work with the care arrangements already in place, and there should be no expectations on the family to have to alter the childcare provider to accommodate the employer’s requests. In Queensland, it is a common and frustrating reality that large high schools often have timetable structures that are antiquated and not fit for purpose when it comes to contemporary work entitlements. Teachers working a 0.6 FTE are often required to come to work five days a week. No childcare centre I am aware of has half-day rates (a further financial penalty), and frankly, a parent juggling to get out the door and get to work five days a week should not have a 0.4 financial penalty.

It is not lost on me that part-time parents, mostly women, are then often thwarted when they seek to return to their substantive full-time positions. A lack of understanding, despite clear protections in the Teaching in Queensland - State Award (2016), meant many women were (wrongly) refused a return to part-time. One woman the QTU assisted had been seeking a return to full-time for ten years. That is a lot of lost income, superannuation and also leave accruals.
The Queensland Government was an early adopter of separate, specific and additional paid leave for an employee who is impacted upon by family and domestic violence. At a school level, the principal can approve ten days of paid leave per year. Further leave is available if needed, and can be approved at a regional level. There is a requirement for all government employees to undertake specific training, and there are support provisions, including safety plans and access to emergent compassionate transfers.

While this is the case in the Queensland public sector, we know the lasting impact trauma and violence has and the need for ALL employers to provide this support. Currently, the national employment standard includes only access to unpaid leave. This needs to be paid leave, especially when we know that financial coercion and control are key factors in abusive relationships, and having access to only unpaid leave creates further barriers and economic consequences for a vulnerable cohort of workers. We should all lend our support to the ACTU’s “We Won’t Wait” campaign for paid domestic and family violence leave across the nation.

Even before the “Enough is Enough” campaign of early 2021 and the March4Justice, union women, including AEU women nationally, contributed to the Human Rights Commission’s Respect@Work report [11]. We know sexual harassment and gender-based violence is prevalent in workplaces across the nation, and schools are no exception. As an AEU survey and the QTU Expect Respect survey demonstrated, the majority of gendered violence experienced by teachers is from students. The recommendations of the Respect@Work report included the nationwide implementation of respectful relationships programs in every school. This has been adopted in a hit and miss style, depending on your state or territory.

Australia faces a crisis when it comes to violence against women. It is ludicrous and unfathomable that the key primary prevention tool (as recommended by Our Watch and other key stakeholders and experts) remains unfunded by the Commonwealth and some states (including Queensland).

At the forefront of my mind when I hear tales of unreported sexual assaults on teachers and the unsupportive response towards those affected is how unsafe the other students in
the classroom must feel. When they see their teachers insulted and abused without consequence we send the message that their safety doesn’t matter.

We need to ensure that teachers know that sexual harassment and abuse is “not part of the job” and that it needs logging as a WH&S incident. We need to ensure that behaviour management systems are recording this behaviour for what it is—gendered violence, so that we can collect data to campaign.

RULE #9
WE STILL DON’T HAVE EQUAL PAY.

Within the QTU, the debate around equal pay started as early as 1897, when it was discussed on the floor of Conference. It is notable that no women spoke in the debate. Rather than focusing on the importance of increasing the wages of women, delegates were mainly concerned with its potential “to bring men’s wages down” (given the engrained inequities, perhaps these concerns were not unfounded, even if they were unjust). In 1899, the wages of male teachers rose, but not those of women. Our Union’s history suggests that some argued at the time that it would encourage the “refusal to undertake the duties of motherhood”. A strong campaign, including statewide meetings and the lobbying of state MPs, the Minister and the Premier, ensued, however, with women yet to achieve suffrage, there were no votes to be gained by appeasing these women teachers and unionists.

By 1922, QTU policy enshrined the principle of equal pay for equal work. However, there is no further reference in Union documents to equal pay until the mid-1940s—again, no doubt due to the impact of World War II. Despite passionate efforts of QTU women, such as our first female President Ruth Don, motions to include the push for equal pay in our log of claims were defeated in the Union’s democratic structures.

In the 1960s, women threatened to leave the QTU if it didn’t campaign for equal pay. Ruth Don effectively persuaded them to stay within the QTU, but as with other unions, it really wasn’t seen as a priority. The women of the QTU were thwarted by male-dominated Union structures and told that only QTU Conference could make the decision to make it a Union priority. By this time, following a 1951 arbitrated wage case, women were receiving 90 percent of the male wage.

In 1966, there was finally a call for submissions from members for proposals for the new general salaries claims, and the Queensland Teachers’ Journal called for immediate implementation of equal pay for women and repeal of the marriage bar legislation. Women teachers received the same pay, for the same work from 1971 [12].

Fifty years later, we know indisputably, even where there is equal pay for equal work, there remains a gendered pay gap. Each year the national Women and Gender Equity Agency collects data across private enterprise and professions. In 2021, the pay gap in Australia is 14.7 percent [13]. In education, the wage gap continues to be impacted upon by part-time work, unpaid leave, gaps in super and also access to promotional positions. Despite positive policy and government agendas, the reality is there remain more men than women in senior management, even in schools, despite women making up the majority of the profession [14]. The barriers to part-time workers accessing promotional positions is also a significant reality.

I am always conscious that in schools we are also role-models for the students we teach; it is often their first experiences of adult workplaces. The students see who has the positions of power, who works mostly part-time and how few people in power get flexible work arrangements. In a time of burn-out and a shortage, the employers really need to recognise the false economy of this approach. We know teacher retention is a real challenge. In Queensland, lack of flexibility is commonly cited as a reason for leaving. We need schools to adopt more flexibility and create more equitable opportunities for part-time workers.

RULE #10
WOMEN TO THE FRONT!

The QTU has clear affirmative action policy. This has ensured that, over the past two decades, real change has occurred when it comes to the Union’s democratic structures (branches, State Council and Conference). Despite these gains, change has taken time, especially when it comes to positions of power. In our feminised, progressive union’s long history, we have had just five women elected President, with Cresta Richardson our current President; and just one woman has been elected General Secretary, Kate Ruttiman, who was elected at the start of 2021, 132 years after the organisation was created.

We know that when we have women in these positions,
it encourages more women to be engaged. It also means some of the long-held structures and barriers to women’s engagement can be addressed. We have gone from our first ever female deputy secretary in 2012 to four of the five paid senior officer positions now being held by women.

We need to tilt the scales of power in education. We need more representation in senior management to encourage the participation of all women. We can’t just mirror the management styles of the “good” blokes who came before, who despite all their “support” would not step aside and make space for “excellent” women. We need to bring other women with us, always provide space and voices for those without the power. When we look around and reflect upon who we are as women with some power within our unions, we need to hold the mirror up. We must learn new ways. We have just gone through the largest social upheaval in generations. This has had a profound impact on the psyche of the whole community, how we work, how we deliver curriculum and our mental and physical health. We have experienced social divide prompted by the management of the pandemic. We need all our leaders, including the dynamic and clever women with power, to create new spaces and change the systems that promote, protect and reward average men who are more likely white than not.

Privilege dominates positional power by its very definition; if women truly want to build on this momentum of radical social change and the national collective mood about gendered violence, we need different ways of leading; and that’s not excluding a diversity of voices in decision making or holding onto power. It’s important that we don’t just replace white men in power with privileged white women. We need to lead differently and consciously include voices that aren’t being heard where decisions are being made. We need to ensure we include and make space for First Nations women, women of colour, women with disabilities and women who don’t have English as a first language. We have a strong history of incredible women in the AEU, we need to make space for current and future generations and ensure that there is a greater diversity of voices in our structures, at every level. 

Think of a workplace advancement in post-colonial Australia that has not been achieved through the organised and collective action of unions.

So while my piece has been very Queensland and government-centric, there are themes and experiences shared among women in education and women in unions nationwide. As educators, we already know the transformative power of education. I call on you to help build the movement striving to secure the modern conditions that will help create a genuinely more equitable future for all workers, parents and students, and safer communities and workplaces. Right now in Australia, the majority of trade union members are women. If you’re not a member already, please join us.

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**THE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN EDUCATORS FACEBOOK SITE SEEKS FRIENDS**

The AWE has set up a facebook site to help members and friends connect and share information. Join up and “like” us!

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