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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Curriculum, democracy and pedagogies for justice: a collective futures dialogue

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Abstract
This collaborative paper by members of the Pedagogies for Social Justice Research Group responds to the question of how curriculum and pedagogy can be *with* and *for* democracy. Our introduction takes Alice Rigney's and Dewey's insights on education and democracy as our point of departure for learning together. As a collective, we have gathered together multiple ways of perceiving and enacting a curriculum for democracy in a context of de-democratisation. We approach tensions, intersections, limits and possibilities of curriculum and democracy from the frames of 'woven' curriculum and critical Indigenous pedagogies; racially, religiously and culturally responsive pedagogies; dialogic and relational approaches; agentic, embodied, activist and rights-based pedagogies; and everyday praxis.
Kalkadoon scholar Mikayla King's opening paper on the woven curriculum provides both a point of departure and a grounding site for weaving together our collaborative insights into curriculum, democracy and pedagogies for justice. Garrett and Windle draw attention to how affective and embodied pedagogies can challenge mind/body binaries and activate rights-based modes of being and learning. Memon observes how religion shapes the lifeworlds of learners and proposes a move towards learning *from* religion. Wrench, Carter, Paige and O'Keeffe advocate for the embedding of eco-justice principles, sociologically informed curriculum, and culturally responsive and story-sharing pedagogies. Lovell and Schulz claim racial literacy as an essential component of a pluralistic democracy that honours First Nations' sovereignty. Soong suggests that 'everyday pedagogy' might enable educators to relate with pre-service teachers as critical and empathetic humanists beyond the role of neoliberalised technicians. Colton and McDonald highlight possibilities within the curriculum for learners to act with the pluralities of the world. McDonald and Schulz argue that gender equity is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, democratic world. We conclude with Hattam's reiteration of how schooling as a key site for social formation re-produces the nation. He urges us to defy the monologue of authoritarian governing and 'live together through dialogue'.

Keywords Pedagogy · Democratisation · Curriculum

Introduction

Katie Maher and Lester-Irabinna Rigney

> The poor do not lack intelligence whether they are black or white. They lack opportunity and all children regardless of background deserve a quality education (Australia's first Aboriginal female school principal – Alice/Alitya Rigney).

Dewey (1916) theorised education and democracy as interwoven. He saw self and society as taking form through the 'organised intelligence' of collective human capacity (1935, p. 31). From Alice Rigney[1] (2017), we learn that education and democracy are matters of living and learning in proximity with multiple margins. From Dewey (1916), we learn that education and democracy are matters of living and learning with others such that the 'very process of living together educates' (p. 3). School, Dewey claimed, must remain

Extended author information available on the last page of the article

[1] Alice/Alitya Rigney quoted by Lester-Irabinna Rigney in 'Respected Aboriginal elder Alice Rigney remembered as pioneering educator and cultural warrior', ABC News, 13th May 2017, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-05-18/aboriginal-elder-alice-rigney-remembered-as-pioneering-educator/8534892

'vitally social'. Only when the school becomes 'cast in a mould and runs in a routine way does it lose its educative power' (1916, p. 3). Dewey observed the danger of schools 'creating an undesirable split' between learning as lived and 'what is acquired in school' (Dewey, 1916, p. 5). In 1916, Dewey saw this danger as urgent on account of the 'rapid growth' of 'knowledge and technical modes of skill' (p. 5). Since the time of Deweyan democracy, the global pandemic, current democratic backsliding, new forms of colonialism and human-led planetary decline have changed the way we think about schools. The new world of education, curriculum and pedagogy in these incredibly challenging times requires theoretical turns that interweave global justice; ecological, digital and scientific knowledge production; and democratic inquiry. Rapid social and political changes require scholars and practitioners to renew the ideas of Dewey, to rethink past school practice architectures and atmospheres that are no longer reliable or valid.

Our paper brings together contributions from scholars participating in the Pedagogies for Social Justice Reading Group, a collective of South Australian scholars with a shared commitment to Education for Justice. Our work takes place with and against rising authoritarianism and the de-democratisation of public institutions. Our collection of short papers responds to the question of how curriculum and pedagogy can be *with* and *for* democracy in the context of de-democratisation. We take inspiration from Giroux's (2018a) call to reclaim education with and for democracy in the midst of authoritarian forces:

> What work do educators have to do to create the economic, political, and ethical conditions necessary to endow young people and the general public with the capacities to think, question, doubt, imagine the unimaginable, and defend education as essential for inspiring and energizing the citizens necessary for the existence of a robust democracy? In a world in which there is an increasing abandonment of egalitarian and democratic impulses, what will it take to educate young people and the broader polity to challenge authority and hold power accountable? (p. 7)

The following contributions provided a multifaceted response to Dewey (1916), Rigney (2017) and Giroux (2018b). As a collective, we bring together multiple ways of perceiving and enacting a curriculum for democracy. We give nuanced consideration to Indigenous, decolonial, race-critical, feminist, humanist and other onto-epistemological positions. We approach tensions, intersections, limits and possibilities of curriculum and democracy from the frames of 'woven' curriculum and critical Indigenous pedagogies; culturally, racially and religiously responsive pedagogies; dialogic and relational approaches; agentic, embodied, activist; and rights-based pedagogies and everyday praxis.

Kalkadoon scholar Mikayla King's opening paper on the woven curriculum provides both a point of departure and a grounding site for weaving together our collaborative insights into the curriculum with and for democracy. King highlights the need for Aboriginal voice and agency within the curriculum with a focus on developing a local curriculum that interweaves Aboriginal philosophical orientations, Country-centredness, cultural and linguistic responsiveness and multiple ways of knowing and learning (Rigney, 2021). King explains woven curriculum as a 'purposeful discursive expression that draws upon weaving knowledges from Aboriginal epistemologies that preexist formal curriculum structures, content and enactment (Rigney et al., 2019)'. Its strength is 'found in its range of threads that are woven together for cohesion, sustainability, strength and visibility whilst honouring a plurality of knowledges, voices and ways of knowing'.

Garrett and Windle note how an undemocratic curriculum operates through a series of exclusions, including historical exclusions of Black, Indigenous, female and working-class bodies and contemporary exclusions of student and teacher humanity and rights. They draw attention to how pedagogies that utilise the body's right to sense, feel, respond and imagine can challenge mind/body binaries and activate rights-based modes of being and learning. Memon brings attention to how religion intersects with cultural, linguistic, racial and gendered identities, shaping the lifeworlds of learners. A democratic curriculum is less a matter of learning 'about' religion and more a move towards "learning *from* religion" (Byrne, 2014). Wrench, Carter, Paige and O'Keeffe observe how culturally insensitive curricular and pedagogical practices contribute to continued educational marginalisation. They advocate for the embedding of eco-justice principles, sociologically informed curriculum, culturally responsive pedagogies and the sharing of stories through which to make sense of the world. Lovell and Schulz observe how the coloniality of Australian education sustains hegemonic Whiteness and delimits democracy. Normalisation of the 'settler right to belong' is upheld by a curriculum that considers Aboriginal histories and cultures as afterthoughts. They argue for racial literacy as an essential component of a pluralistic democracy that honours First Nations sovereignty. Soong suggests that 'everyday pedagogy' might enable educators to relate with pre-service teachers as critical and empathetic humanists beyond the role of neoliberalised technicians. She draws on the diverse positionalities that are linked to her history and lived experience as 'Asian' to propose a more nuanced counter perspective to contest the neoliberal values of education. Soong encourages educators to democratise curriculum by looking within themselves and working alongside pre-service teachers as bearers of particular democratic rights and responsibilities. Colton and McDonald ask, 'How might the Australian Curriculum:

English work to produce the democratic individual? How does it work to generate social participation? How does it maintain and regenerate democracy?' They highlight possibilities within the curriculum for learners to act with the pluralities of the world. McDonald and Schulz note how schooling re-produces the nation through framing what is 'real' or negated, bringing particular attention to groups harmed by dominant gender relations. Gender equity, they argue, is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, democratic world. We conclude our collaborative paper with Hattam's reiteration of how schooling re-produces the nation. Given that schooling is a key site for social formation, educators are now implicated in the trend towards increasing authoritarianism and neoliberalism. Hattam presents the Australian curriculum as a 'case study on how reality is framed by schooling' and 'an ur-text for how the nation maps out political struggle'. He urges us to defy the monologue of authoritarian governing and 'live together through dialogue'.

Woven curriculum: a new perspective on curriculum whilst enacting democratic inclusion

Mikayla King, Kalkadoon Woman

As an attempt to weave into the existing knowledge loom, I weave in a new thread coined as Woven Curriculum that builds upon the existing archive and that seeks to address the democratic inclusion of children through the Australian curriculum. This urgent priority demands new perspectives that require one to shift their gaze and pursue a more nuanced analysis of curriculum through weaving voices and knowledges of many.

The democratic rights of all children include accessing curriculum for learning which is essential in the development of active, communal citizens within Australia. However, Aboriginal learners remain without such rights as evidenced by the high rates of school failure on Aboriginal learners that is visible in the disproportionate rates between Aboriginal students and their peers in standardised testing regimes and closing the gap statistics (Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2020). The foundations of formalised curriculum development in Australia were inspired by colonisation with assimilative intentions. As a result, Aboriginal peoples have been excluded and eventually established in the margins of the Australian curriculum which reinforces the invisibility of Aboriginal peoples, cultures, voices and knowledges (Maher, 2022; King, 2022; Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2021). Curriculum in its current state remains a colonial legacy with a significant power imbalance, in favour of the colonisers.

Curriculum is highly contested as it is embedded with issues of politics and power. In context, the position of Aboriginal knowledges through Western ways of knowing is detrimental to Aboriginal knowledges as it requires fragmentation and decontextualization which harms the sustainability of Aboriginal knowledges (Rigney et al., 2019). One of the more significant political moves in recent times was a transition to a national curriculum in late 2010 (Maxwell et al., 2018). This saw an alignment amongst states and territories through structure and content.

The ongoing theorising of curriculum is essential in responding to geographical location, clientele and the social and political climate as it evolves (Brady & Kennedy, 2007). Whilst seeking to theorise a fit-for-purpose version of curriculum in Australia, I drew upon the work of Walker (2003) who identified key concepts of curriculum, those being: content, purpose, organisation and planning. These concepts are essential in understanding knowledge production, facilitation and enactment whilst critically examining the political and power relations.

Drawing on definitions by Pinar et al. (1995) from the field of curriculum studies and Aboriginal education theory, in particular, Shay, Sarra, Lowe, Rigney and Rigney (Shay et al., 2023; Weuffen et al., 2023; Rigney, 2021; Rigney et al., 2019; Maxwell et al., 2018), I offer 'Woven Curriculum' as an alternate perspective on curriculum. The term Woven Curriculum is a purposeful discursive expression that draws upon weaving knowledges from Aboriginal epistemologies that pre-exist formal curriculum structures, content and enactment (Rigney et al., 2019). Through the constraints of Standard Australian English, I will draw upon many Aboriginal women weavers as I attempt to communicate the essence of the 'complex and multilayered' (Harkin, 2020, p. 156) conceptual frame of a woven curriculum. Weaving is a communal process that includes the careful selection and preparation of a range of fibres that are woven together to provide strength for its various purposes as a response to the communal supply and demand process whilst engaging in rich knowledge transfer practices such as yarning (Aunty Ellen Trevorrow in Maher, 2022; Harkin, 2020; Bell, Gale, McHughes, Williams & Koolmatrie in Ryder et al., 2020; Rigney et al., 2019; Gough, 2006). As I draw upon weaving knowledges in this context, I am explicitly resisting the rigid structures, binary and purity of curriculum as it currently operates to serve the neo-liberal and neo-colonial framing of education systems in Australia (Lowe in Rigney et al., 2019). This approach brings forward a creative, plural and responsive opportunity for curriculum in Australia that privileges Indigenous Intellectual Sovereignty (Rigney, 2001).

A woven curriculum employs local curriculum development capacity through key threads explored below:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander philosophy orientation

- Place-based centred by Country
- Aboriginal languages, culturally and linguistically responsive
- Multiple knowledges and ways of knowing (King, 2022).

A woven curriculum draws upon threads from the local community that ensure a plurality of local voices, knowledges and resources are woven alongside each other for cohesion, sustainability, strength and visibility (King, 2022).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Philosophy Orientated ensures principles and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander epistemologies are centred, ensuring the diversity of experiences and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are valued (King, 2022). *Place-based centred by Country* ensures that curriculum structures and content is contextualised by Country. This highlights the importance of privileging localised knowledges, resources, voices, experiences and aspirations of children, families and members of the community in which the curriculum serves and ensuring curriculum is purposeful (King, 2022). *Aboriginal languages*, *culturally and linguistically responsive* draw upon the voices of children, families and community members to facilitate a woven curriculum that responds to the spectrum of languages and cultures to facilitate learning experiences throughout curriculum planning, facilitation and assessment. Being linguistically and culturally responsive will enable curriculum to be delivered at level and pace of its learners (King, 2022; Morrison et al., 2019). *Multiple knowledges and ways of knowing* in this context ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' ways of knowing will provide a portal to understanding the connectedness, relationality and co-existence of knowledge relationships that are essential to knowledge transfer, embodiment and engagement (King, 2022). The structure of multiple ways of knowing highlights the individuality of learners and their ways of coming to know, understand and engage as knowledge producers (King, 2022; Rigney, 2021).

Therefore, the strength of a woven curriculum can be found in its range of threads that are woven together for cohesion, sustainability, strength and visibility whilst honouring a plurality of knowledges, voices and ways of knowing. Through relationality, as a woven curriculum emerges in the local community that it serves, I reinforce the importance of the four key threads: Aboriginal philosophy orientation, place-based centred by Country, Aboriginal languages, culturally and linguistically responsive and multiple knowledges and ways of knowing. In conclusion, I must acknowledge that curriculum is not exclusively the answer to the systemic failure of schooling on Aboriginal students. Therefore, weaving responsive pedagogies, policies, whole school practices and funds of knowledge has to be enacted for the democratic inclusion that this article is demanding.

Reimagining curriculum through rights-based and embodied pedagogies

Robyne Garrett and Joel Windle

We are concerned here with a classic problem of mass schooling that has intensified under the conditions of neoliberal testing regimes and teacher de-professionalisation: the reduction of students to receptacles of pre-set knowledge ('deposit account' in Freire's (1996) banking model). This reductionism is anti-democratic because it separates students from others and themselves—the antithesis of the egalitarian social communion of subjects who share interests that Dewey (2001) offered as the definition of a democratic society. Schools are undemocratic when they reproduce undemocratic social separations, as a long line of critical scholars show they have (Freire, 1996; Shor, 2017; Luke, 2018; Giroux, 2018a, 2018b). These exclusions include historical exclusions of Black, Indigenous, female and working-class bodies. They are evident in formal curriculum materials, the disembodiment of learning, in the direct marginalisation of individuals and groups and in the disqualification of alternative ways of being, speaking, moving, knowing and learning.

It is worth noting that contemporary struggles for democratic social participation in and outside of schooling in the Pacific, which frame our contribution here, insist on the recognition of students as subjects with rights as a starting point for any discussion. This is a particularly strong characteristic of contributions from Indigenous scholars and activists (Moodie, 2021; Rigney, 2016), and under the pressure for constitutional recognition of First Nations sovereignty. In drawing on the critical lineage of work in dialogic and embodied curricula that can be traced back to Dewey (1938), Vygotsky et al. (1994), Bandura (1977) and Gardner (2006), we are continually challenged to ask questions about 'What students should learn and who gets to decide'. We believe a democratic curriculum must restore an embodied and humanising approach to schooling and knowledge generation. One that takes seriously a rights-based perspective as well as liberating the body's right to move and be moved, to affect and be affected both inside and outside of schools.

Pedagogical spaces are needed that respect the rights, humanity and bodies of learners, above and beyond learning as measured by high-stakes tests. When educational success is narrowly defined teachers are stifled in their attempts to invest in democratic, dialogic, agentic and embodied approaches. Students become passive receivers of knowledge where they are instructed what to do, think and write. They create work for others who give

'marks', as a surrogate measure of educational success (Garrett, 2022). In the process, bodies are examined, praised, graded, hurt or shut down, and for the young people themselves, these experiences are sensed, felt deeply and have affect. Young people from marginalised and economically disadvantaged communities continue to be cast as unsuccessful when it is the system itself that has failed. These learners constantly feel unseen, unknown or unacknowledged. What feels important to them does not seem to count in the business of schooling (Boldt, 2021), and ultimately, they are left with a diminished sense that they matter.

In drawing attention to ontological and epistemic violence, we call for a much broader reworking of educational and foundational rights. Generic notions of inequality do not recognise the nuanced and everyday practices of oppression that include racism, sexism, classism, ableism and identity discrimination as well as cultural and linguistic genocide (Windle & Fensham, 2022). Whilst Indigenous movements generate acknowledgement of cultural and linguistic rights as well as the valuing of Indigenous epistemologies and embodied ways of being, more recent debates highlight LGBTQI communities and rights to protection from discrimination. Where understandings of a collective 'disadvantage' are easily extrapolated into policies of control and paternalism, little if anything changes, and inequality *without rights* denies the young people themselves from the humanising and empowering role of education. In attending to the connections between rights and systems of oppression, a dynamic concept of rights can emerge, one that is responsive to both historical as well as emerging political and social movements.

Following Biesta (2014), we advocate for a prioritising of pedagogies that work 'at the intersection of education and human togetherness' (p. 23) where a rights-based curriculum and pedagogy can be enacted, and attention is drawn to the links between rights and inequalities as well as the power of affect and embodiment in creating human connection. Bringing bodies together in space and time creates possibilities for dialogic engagement and democratic and rights-based expression (Windle & Fensham, 2022). In coming to understand the collective forces of affect, we offer alternative pedagogies including those that utilise the body's right to sense, feel, respond and imagine (Garrett, 2022). These approaches represent an epistemological shift towards understanding bodies as agents of learning and knowledge production that challenge mind/body binaries and activate rights-based modes of being and learning. Democracy can be found in these human encounters, in moments where ways of being and knowing come together. It is in these moments, we realise that we *are* equal and in this together (Riddle & Apple, 2019).

The dilemma of religious identities in post-secular schools

Nadeem Memon

Classrooms in Australian public schools are increasingly super diverse (Vertovec, 2007). For most aspects of super diversity (race, class, gender, culture), educators continue to grapple with what commitments to responsive pedagogies can look like. However, religion and expressions of learner religious identities in particular remain contested for many educators who question whether religion even belongs within state schools (Maddox, 2014; Biesta and Hannam, 2020). Ongoing debates on religious discrimination in Australia further reinforce polarised public opinion on the place and relevance of religion (Bouma, 2012; Ezzy et al., 2023; Keddie et al., 2018). Discourses of modernity often assert a false dichotomy between secular and religious or liberalism and traditionalism. For educators, these dichotomies and debates dismiss the realities that some learners identify with a religion and do so in diverse and complex ways. Among the dilemmas, educators committed to responsive pedagogies face how to be responsive to the complex, at times sensitive and ever-becoming identities of their learners when religion intersects (Memon & chanicka, 2024). How and to what extent should the religious identities of learners be supported? Are there limits to being 'religiously responsive' in secular public schools? Post-secular theory in education reminds us that religion has always contributed to social theory, and though religion is evolving with innovative expressions of faith, religions remain central to the lives of some and by virtue have learning and teaching implications in democratic societies (Byrd, 2016; Hotam & Wexler, 2014).

Research that I have led in Australia and Canada explores the affective entanglements for educators when religion or religious identities arise in the classroom. Despite deep commitments to equity, inclusion and culturally responsive pedagogies, educators commonly express hesitation, discomfort, and at times outright resistance towards religion when the topic arises in state/public school classrooms (Memon et al., 2023). Part of the rationale for such affective responses is tied to oversimplified views of secularity where it is perceived that religion must simply be excluded (Chavura, 2011; Keddie et al., 2018). Educators expressed a fear of being reprimanded by state education officials and/or parental backlash for being responsive to aspects of learner identity deemed 'too sensitive' (Memon et al., 2023). For educators committed to a democratic curriculum, engaging with the religious identities of learners must begin with acknowledging the roots of simplistic conceptions of secularity through bland multiculturalism and enlightenment logic (Memon

& chanicka, 2024). Religion evidently informs the lifeworlds of many learners and intersects in complex ways with cultural, linguistic, racial and gendered identities. Democratic curriculum and responsive pedagogy are less about teaching *about* multi-faith education to foster intercultural understanding and more towards 'learning *from* religion' (Byrne, 2014) as part of what a learner brings to the classroom. Similar to culturally responsive pedagogies, engaging with the religious identities of learners requires no competency from educators other than a commitment to engage with the full self of a learner's lifeworlds. To support educator commitments to robust responsive pedagogies, however, does require official education policy, professional standards and curriculum priorities to explicitly acknowledge religion as an identity marker that belongs.

Culturally responsive curriculum for democracy in initial teacher education

Alison Wrench, Jenni Carter, Kathryn Paige and Lisa O'Keeffe

Culturally insensitive and, hence, undemocratic curricular and pedagogical practices contribute to the continued educational marginalisation and disadvantage experienced by First Nations Indigenous[2] students amongst others (Thaman, 2009; Vass, 2017). For a nation that claims to be an established democracy, 'something as basic and important as school education should not be provided unequally on the basis of wealth or birth' (Reid, 2019, p. 176). However, contradictions about how Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs can realise democratic educational principles and practices prevail. Zembylas (2021) reminds us that curricular and pedagogical practices should 'cultivate democratic values in critical and constructive ways' (p. 5). We argue that culturally responsive pedagogies (CRP) provide strong critical and sociological foundations for democratic education in ITE. Through a CRP lens, we present affordances of mathematics, science, health and physical education along with the English curriculum in ITE.

The challenges of inclusive and culturally responsive curriculum in ITE are multiple and complex. In response, we advocate embedding eco-justice principles (Paige et al., 2016) in transdisciplinary and sustainability approaches to mathematics and science education. These principles can be used to bring Western and Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies into dialogue. They provide a platform for critical reflections about established beliefs, values and practices around the environment, biodiversity and the natural world as well as the development of skills and dispositions towards addressing pressing problematics such as climate change. Eco-justice principles also inform our prioritisation of critical and sociocultural dimensions of numeracy in mathematics education (O'Keeffe & Paige, 2021). Rendering social justice issues explicitly, broadening understandings, equipping individuals with capacities to engage with different perspectives and providing opportunities through mathematics for actioning social justice are pivotal. There is a pressing need for mathematics and science curricula in ITE to engage with how 'humans' impact places and all other species. This is about democratic fairness within generations, fairness between generations and fairness between species.

Eurocentric, 'white' male sporting culture underpins the dominant framing for health and physical education (HPE) in ITE. Of consequence are invisible markers of identity, ability and advantage that contribute to the ongoing marginalisation of Indigenous students, their embodied movement and health cultures. In response, we argue for sociologically informed HPE curriculum and CRP practices, which unsettle such undemocratic practices. This requires an assemblage of strategies in ITE that build knowledge, contribute to consciousness-raising and activate affective responses and alternative possibilities for HPE curriculum and pedagogical practices. Possibilities include cooperative play of Indigenous games, connectivity with cultural practices and addressing racism in sports (Wrench, 2022). Activist-oriented HPE in ITE represents a means for countering the persistent educational disadvantage of students whose cultural resources are not those of the cultural majority.

The telling and sharing of stories are significant cultural practices through which we make sense of the world. Through stories, we explore issues and preserve and pass on cultural knowledge, an important way of keeping cultures alive. Stories 'word the world' (de Oliveira, 2021), privileging the meanings and values of some, forgetting or erasing those of others. It is the intent of the Australian Curriculum English that children and young people both read and create literary texts, imaginatively, critically and aesthetically (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2023). We argue that ITE must provide opportunities for developing a deep understanding of the perspectives, values and traditions that are deeply embedded in the texts that children and young people encounter. Developing pedagogical strategies that focus on deep critical encounters with a wide range of texts (oral, print and digital), identifying power structures, social and cultural contexts, perspectives, and representations. As such, developing knowledges and capacities to participate respectfully in

[2] We use the term First Nations Indigenous students to describe 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' whilst acknowledging diversity in acceptance of this term in Australia. We use pluralised reference terms to respectfully encompass the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities.

We also recognise the colonial legacy these terms sustain.

local and national conversations about ways of being human together, histories, reconciliation and matters of race and difference.

Teaching and curriculum that seek to foster cultural competence and respect as integral components of democratic education require collective unsettling of academics' and pre-service teachers' ontological and epistemological understandings as well as collaborative relational practices. Such practices demand 'teaching as artistry' rather than control and mechanist applications (Biesta, 2023). There is, hence, an urgent need for ITE programs that foster curricula and teaching practices designed to meet the cultural and educational needs of all children.

Racial literacy and Australian schooling: rethinking democracy through a race critical lens

Margaret Lovell and Samantha Schulz

> The possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty is deployed to promote the idea of race neutrality through concepts attached to the ideals of democracy, such as egalitarianism, equity, and equal opportunity. This allows patriarchal white sovereignty to remain transparent and invisible – two key attributes of its power. (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 81)

Australian education lives under an imagined "racial democracy" (Ferreira, 2011) that is facilitated, as Goenpul woman Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson illustrates, by the possessive logic of 'patriarchal white sovereignty'—the notion of 'Australia' as a White possession. Within this context, meritocracy and 'colour blindness' (Medina, 2013) define success, inclusion and diversity according to naturalised White measures of achievement—where White is used here to signal racialised social and institutional structures whilst 'White' references racialised subject positionality. Influenced by neoliberalism as a vehicle for white sovereignty (Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Tuck & Guishard, 2013), Initial Teacher Education in Australia largely fails to include sustained learnings regarding colonisation, 'race' and racisms or whiteness as a category that is 'normalised within systems that privilege "whites"' (Zembylas, 2018, p. 86). For Australia's growing non-white and culturally diverse student populations, daily classroom experiences may thus be marked by normalised racial harms that are reproduced through curriculum and pedagogical practices, by teachers and by peers (Moodie et al., 2019; Priest et al., 2019).

Originating in South America, the concept of racial democracy (Ferreira, 2011) has significance for Australian education where standards and accountability frameworks naturalise whiteness as a norm against which 'others' are judged (Lucashenko, 2017; Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012). The myth of racial democracy allows Australia's majority 'White' teaching force to remain largely blind to these racialised inequalities, whilst multiculturalist and meritocratic discourses reinforce the idea that anyone can achieve if they just work hard enough (Koerner & Pillay, 2020). This 'bootstrap' version of educational equality thus maintains racialised inequality. For instance, rather than standardised testing or curriculum practices being realised as manifestations of racialised oppression, they are reconfigured through dominant discourses of Australian schooling as 'evidence' of non-white students' failure (Maher, 2022; Vass, 2017).

For teachers committed to educational equity, racial literacy may advance understandings of a racialised Australia. Building on the work of critical race scholars in Australia (see for example Moreton-Robinson, 2004a, 2004b; Bargallie & Lentin, 2020), as well as racial literacy theorists in British health (Twine, 2004) and US law (Guinier, 2004) sectors, Australian racial literacy denotes knowledge and skills that 'enable critical understandings of race and how [it] operates' (Brown et al., 2021, p. 85). Such understandings can awaken 'White' teachers to coloniality as a contemporary construct of education systems that unfairly privilege White ways of knowing. Teachers with emergent racial literacy may become more empowered to enact their pedagogical responsibility to super-diverse (Morrison et al., 2019) classrooms, whilst expanding their capacities to foster participatory forms of democracy that are less vulnerable to capture by 'systems of racial oppression' (Elias & Paradies, 2021, p. 45).

As a liberal democracy, Australia is built on the dispossession and attempted genocide of sovereign Aboriginal Peoples for whom 'representative' democracy simply does not work (Tatz, 2013). As Wiradjuri man and respected journalist Professor Stan Grant powerfully articulates, social inequalities driven by aggressive neoliberal reforms are reaching crisis points in Australia and worldwide, effectively 'eating democracy alive' (Grant, 2022). Our current state of democracy thus hardly works for everyone, and certainly not for sovereign First Nations Peoples. The continuing attempted genocide of Aboriginal Peoples (via the killing times of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the incarceration of Aboriginal children and adults of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries) means that populations of Aboriginal Peoples are only just now beginning to recover. It is essential that Australia's majority of white teaching force (MacGill, 2022) thus actively listens to, amplifies and learns from Aboriginal perspectives and voices.

However, research demonstrates that Australian teachers feel hamstrung when it comes to enacting socially just pedagogies that genuinely support this endeavour (see for

example Bishop et al., 2021; Thorpe et al., 2021). Specifically, teachers report feeling reluctant, fearful, and unsupported (White et al., 2022; Williams & Morris, 2022). If a first step in working towards racially equitable forms of democracy through schooling involves not only learning to 'see' racisms but moving beyond fear or apprehension, then racial literacy may support teachers to develop the linguistic and analytic as well as affective/emotional tools necessary for this work (Schulz et al., 2023). White educators with emergent racial literacy may not only acknowledge the Country; they may teach and learn from and with the Country (Burgess et al., 2022). They may not only recognise Aboriginal Peoples' unceded sovereignty (see Rigney, 2001; they may actively teach the colonisation of the continent now known as 'Australia' as an ongoing settler project. They may not only 'allow' space and time for non-white voices and stories; they may proactively amplify Aboriginal Peoples' perspectives, histories and concerns as central to the learning of every Australian.

Racial literacy in Australian teacher education is an essential component of a democracy that goes beyond token inclusion and honours First Nations sovereignty within a diverse national context that warrants 'a truly heterogenous chorus' (Delpit, 1996, p. 11).

The need for an 'everyday pedagogy' to democratising curriculum: personal perspectives

Hannah Soong

Drawing from Nussbaum's (2017) work that differentiates a democratic education for citizenship and an education for profit, I hope to provide a perspective for a teacher education that develops our Australian pre-service teachers to come to terms with democracy, citizenship and inclusion (Kim & Hsieh, 2021). Whilst Nussbaum's work is based in the United States, the forms of democratising our curriculum can still be relevant to our Australian context. The question is how can we enact the humanistic theory of action to foster better respect for diversity of knowledge traditions and promotion of intercultural understanding despite the neoliberal influences? This is not an easy question to answer, so, I am offering a more grounded proposition from Nussbaum (2017) and providing my answer in two ways. First, in line with Nussbaum's work, I argue that the struggles against the problematic discourses of 'education for profit' should begin with working alongside our pre-service teachers and teacher educators. We need to think of how to reposition our pre-service teachers as more than technicians in a neoliberalised teacher education system (Zeichner, 2010) which is a system that pushes for efficiency and surveillance under the guise of 'accountability' (Apple, 2016). Second, if we are serious about developing a praxis for our pre-service teachers to be critical and empathetic thinkers for humanism that Nussbaum (2017) advocates for, I propose that our educational efforts as teacher educators should be viewed as 'everyday pedagogy' enactments, against the functions of the current neoliberalised system.

Conceptually, the paper conceives 'everyday' as a pedagogic function in terms of its relationship to, and construction of, pre-service teachers and teacher educators as bearers of particular citizen rights, responsibilities and ethical obligations. My interest in the intersection of teacher education and lived experience of 'inclusion, citizenship and democracy' (ibid) grew from 2017 to 2019, when I spent 4 weeks each year with a group of young Australian pre-service teachers, accompanying them for a cross-border placement experience in Shanghai. I applied an ethnographic perspective during my time with them, as I listened closely to their recounts and asked myself what 'funds of knowledge' they brought and received from their cross-border teaching experiences. Applying repeated in-depth interviews and observation journals, I recognised I had become embedded in their 'everyday' experiences as I observed, talked and ate with them to observe how they adapted to new living and teaching environments. Unbeknown to me, I realised that I became part of their 'everyday' encounters of learning how to understand 'the other' because I was also seen as visibly different in the eyes of the pre-service teachers.

Based on this observation, I understand that my representation as 'Asian' is not new. Billig in his seminal work on '*Banal nationalism*' (1995) describes how nationalism is reproduced through the 'visible, but unnoticed' and unreflexive everyday practices. Thus, how I am perceived as an 'Asian' can be dated back to the orientalist imaginaries of the East in order to legitimise colonial exploits (Said, 2013). I also understand that I come to this understanding from four different positions: (i) as a Southeast Asian Chinese Australian living within a neighbourhood where forms of diversity are, unfortunately, domesticated into restaurants and supermarkets; (ii) as a person perceived by others to have low proficiency in English; (iii) as a person who has experienced mobility across borders for the most part of my life, and who defines myself as a transnational citizen; and (iv) as a teaching-research academic, trained at an Australian university, who has undertaken field work research in various social, cultural and educational settings in Australia. These diverse positionalities are linked to my history and lived experience of being-in-flux (Soong, 2016). Reflecting back on that, I can say that what shaped me most was how I have experienced living in what Wise

(2009) has frequently described as the 'everyday multiculturalism' of connecting and interacting with individuals, in highly multicultural communities. Whether the orientalist portrayals of Asian societies continue to re-surface, and whether our children can become critical global citizens, the notion of 'everyday' emphasises the importance of 'repeated relational practices, regardless of whether we are official citizens …strangers…outsiders or aliens' (Isin & Nielson, 2007, p. 37). I therefore propose a more nuanced counter perspective to contest the neoliberal values of education despite the ongoing challenges of hyper-regulation.

Like the United States, Australia too has become a nation of great distributional inequalities along with resulting social, health and educational deficiencies. Nussbaum argues that the pure pursuit of economic growth has put so much pressure on education that there is little space and time left to think about what education for democratic citizenship can strive for, and how it can produce a healthy, engaged and democratic nation (2017). Nussbaum has since been pursuing a model of education that understands the frailties of economic values in order to put more care on 'serious critical thinking about class, about race and gender … [about] the rural poor, [and] about whether democracy can survive when huge inequalities in basic life-chances [exist]' (2017, p. 20). Au (2017) further discusses the contradictory effects of a neoliberal project on teacher education and teachers in the United States. Au finds that on the one hand, teacher education has been deregulated in order to stimulate more innovation and competition in the global market. Whilst, on the other hand, the actual labour of teachers has been hyper-regulated where 'institutional practices and expectations to count … are [made] possible in the interest of efficiency and surveillance' (p. 283). Regardless of these contradictory effects of the neoliberal audit culture, both our teaching workforce and pre-service teachers feel these same pressures.

I recognise that the neoliberal standards of increasing 'quality' teaching can prolong anxiety and uncertainty about our pre-service teachers' professional development. This will eventually affect their individual engagement with what it takes to be critical and ethical educators. Yet, for education to become more like a democratised curriculum, there needs a bottom-up approach that recognises the 'everyday' practices, interactions and actions, and particularly, how we as teacher educators become reflexive about who we are, and how and why we act the way we do as an integral part of an 'everyday pedagogy'. To become a humanistic educator thus requires us to look within ourselves to work alongside our pre-service teachers to democratise curriculum through our 'everyday pedagogy'.

Where is democracy in the Australian curriculum: English?

Jill Colton and Sarah McDonald

The English classroom has long functioned as a site for considering the social world and our place within it. The subject of English may be viewed as a vehicle for preparing young people for democratic participation in society. With this function in mind, we propose an interrogation of the most recent version of the Australian Curriculum: English (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2023) as a site for democracy. Our interrogation of how democracy is constituted within the Australian Curriculum; English is framed by Biesta's (2015) summaries of three approaches to the democratic subject. These approaches are Kant's individualistic notion of the production of the democratic subject, Dewey's notion of the enablement of social participation and Arendt's notion of the ongoing production and renewal of 'democracy'.

Biesta argues that Kant's conception of the democratic subject sees individuals as autonomous and rational individuals who use reasoning to make their own individual judgements (2015). Education is tasked with creating the rational, autonomous person and is necessarily focused on logic, argument and critical thinking. In the subject of English, we may see this educational aim underpinning the production of essays, debates and rhetorical texts and justifying an emphasis on individual assignments and exams that assess a student's individual capacity to think rationally and make judgements.

Dewey's conception of the democratic person moves away from the individualism of Kant to a more social and cultural view. In Dewey's view, the mind—intelligence, thinking and reflecting—is acquired through interactions where the educated individual is socially derived. Education, therefore, has a social function, and individuals are enculturated through educative experiences into a democratic society of shared understandings, interests and social practices. This view of education is familiar to many English teachers who teach contextual readings of texts, value different perspectives, create opportunities for dialogue in their classrooms, and enable students to work collaboratively.

Offering some contrast to Kant's and Dewey's conceptions of the democratic person, which presume that the curriculum *prepares* individuals for participation in democratic life, Arendt's conception is more rooted in *action* and *interaction*. In Arendt's view, rather than being an individual attribute produced through the curriculum, democratic subjectivity is enacted through the opportunities provided through curricula to 'bring their own unique beginnings into

the world' (Biesta, 2015, p. 139). In this sense, the purpose of the curriculum is to prepare people to regenerate and renew democracy through action in a pluralistic world (i.e., not individual action but action in relation to others).

Given these three conceptions of the democratic person, we propose an inquiry into the Australian Curriculum: English to consider how might the Australian Curriculum: English work to produce the democratic individual. How does it work to generate social participation? How does it maintain and regenerate 'democracy'?

We propose that this work may take place through an interrogation of the three strands in the English framework, language, literature and literacy, as exemplified below with reference to the year-9 curriculum.

In the *language strand*, it is implied that the produced individual will be cognisant of the relationship between language and power and able to critically analyse language and text. In the literature strand, it is implied that the democratic person understands themselves and others in relation to a social system in which there are diverse perspectives that have emerged from and are positioned by socio-cultural contexts. Literary analysis is foregrounded for the purpose of understanding how literature impacts the self and others. In the literacy strand, a more technical approach is apparent with a focus on genre which is derived from a social model of language and literacy, but also has some consideration of literacy as a social practice. This may be seen as a strand in which the tools of English literacy are developed.

Our initial tracings of democracy within the Australian Curriculum: English v9 has uncovered opportunities for Kant's and Dewey's notions of the democratic person. We see also the possibilities within this curriculum for English-teaching which centres action, focusses on individual becoming and is responsible for the pluralities and differences of the world. We concur with Biesta that language (which underpins/is a key element within the English curriculum) is a social practice through which students 'can find new ways of seeing themselves, new ways of bringing themselves into the world' (p. 139). When individuals recognise their positioning within socio-cultural and pluralistic contexts, they are given the impetus for action. They develop the tools for action in realising their agency to individually and collectively impact on the world through reflecting, responding, creating, and expanding ideas. There are, in the current Australian Curriculum: English, possibilities for the democratic practices mentioned above. However, because much of these possibilities are implied, we propose that ultimately, is how teachers, school leaders and others both interpret and enact (or are permitted to enact) the curriculum that really matters.

Putting gender back on the agenda: looking back to look forward to 'gender equity' in Australian schooling

Samantha Schulz and Sarah McDonald

Looking back

Schooling in Australia has always been heavily gendered and efforts to challenge gender inequalities have continually met resistance. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Australian secondary schooling was mostly limited to 'white' middle-class youth, and virtually all secondary schools were segregated by sex (Campbell & Whitehead, 2015). Schooling was heavily influenced by the psychological theories of G. Stanley Hall (1904), who believed that adolescence was a 'biologically determined stage in a fixed cycle of human development' (Connell, 2005, p. 12) and that only middle-class boys were deemed capable of moving into enlightened adulthood. Boys' and girls' secondary curricula were circumscribed accordingly, and university entrance was limited to white middle-class boys (Campbell & Whitehead, 2015).

By 1971, less than one-third of Australian university students were female (Jones & Castle, 1983), and the Australian labour market was described by the OECD as 'the most highly segregated by sex of any it had studied' (Boulden, 2013, p. 1). The 1975 Commonwealth Schools Commission report *Girls, School and Society* highlighted gaps in educational participation and outcomes for boys and girls, as well as the impacts of schooling patterns for life beyond school (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001; Martinez, 2013). By the mid-1980s, girls continued 'to be disadvantaged by an education system that limits their options' (Boulden, 2013, p. 1). However, by 1987, on the back of feminist struggles, Australia finally became the first country to create federal initiatives for the promotion of gender equity in schools (Kenway, 1990; Yates, 1993). By the early 1990s, the ground-breaking *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls* (1993–1997) was produced, which included support structures and funding along with eight priority areas for advancing equitable social change (Martinez, 2013). Nonetheless, as momentum gathered to redress deep-rooted gendered inequalities in schools and society that left girls collectively, if differentially, marginalised, backlash was also mounting.

The *O'Doherty Report* argued that boys' education was in crisis and that boys were the new disadvantaged (Boulden, 2013; Lingard, 2003). By 1997, *Gender Equity: A National Framework* was produced as a compromise. Eight priority areas were reduced to five; the framework was handballed from federal to state governments with no funding or support (Ailwood, 2003), and as gender equity discourses were

hindered, the political dominance of the Howard-led Coalition Government intensified. Howard effectively activated the second phase of neoliberalism in Australia (Stratton, 2011), resulting in a flourishing of the private schooling sector and increased pressure on schools to concentrate on competitive individualism, at the expense of equity agendas (Connell, 2013). The neoliberal turn in Australian schooling thus saw gender equity slip from the radar, and we are yet to see it return with any force.

Taking stock

Conceptually, neoliberalism views the human in economic terms and empties the subject of content whilst reinforcing the epistemological dominance of the Cartesian individual (Moreton-Robinson, 2004a, 2004b). Castro-Gómez describes this as the workings of zero-point philosophy—a sleight of hand that centres and naturalises a decontextualised white male whilst erasing the subject of enunciation (cited in Grosfoguel, 2011). Neoliberalism has thus facilitated the dominance of psychologising[3] language in education, which leads us to look for decontextualised solutions 'inside' individuals, 'who become the focus of our attempts at bettering the world of education' (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2018, p. x). A gender equity subjectivity nonetheless requires contextual thinking. Yet, within contexts dominated by neoliberal logics, the language of gender equity can be framed as 'unnatural' or as having gone 'too far'. Moreover, whilst neoliberalism has emptied the subject, 'neoconservatism [… fills] this gap with normative white hegemony' (Gray & Nicholas, 2019, p. 272), thus fuelling a rise of far-right and populist movements, including those that distillate around notions of white male victimhood (Morris, 2021). Whilst schools have fallen silent on gender equity, an online 'manosphere' has thus surfaced that aggressively champions masculinist logics, from which young people are not immune.

Looking forward

At present, educators must hunt to find 'gender', let alone gender equity, in major Australian educational policies. Although the teaching standards and Australian Curriculum (AC) ask educators to cater equitably to student 'diversity', and whilst diversity could be stretched to include gender and sexuality, the AC's version sees diversity linked to students who are 'disabled, gifted, or of non-English-speaking background'.[4] Evidence suggests that most young Australians support gender equality, yet there is also 'a growing sense among young people that gender equality has been achieved and that feminism was a movement required by generations past' (Politoff et al, 2019, p. 13). Young people cannot be expected to magically 'know' how to understand, contest or navigate the complexities of gender or how to advance gender equity. Furthermore, schools remain sites where individualising discourses mitigate against the complex contextual thinking required of a gender equity subjectivity. If gender parity is a fundamental human right and a basis for democracy, then gender equity must occupy space within Australian educational policy and practice—Australian youth deserve no less.

Towards a conclusion: reality is what we say it is!

Robert Hattam

In these challenging times, young people want a stronger say in their futures. Survey after survey indicates youth are fearful about the future and are frustrated by a lack of educational and democratic support to develop quality responses to their hopes and fears. This reality has once again raised questions of a uniform national curriculum and standardised testing that is not well placed to bridge the gap between student aspirations and individualised neoliberal political logic. Despite the student body being highly diverse and mobile, these rationales and policy intentions abandon plurality for sameness. Schooling and curricula now entangle teachers' work and practice in de-democratised forms of learning.

The Australian zeitgeist channels the myth of an egalitarian society and also celebrates our democracy. But then Australian democracy is weak at best, and under the influence of a dominating neoliberal political philosophy, we now live in a country that is becoming more authoritarian. And, given that schooling/education is a key site for social and identity formation, educators are now implicated in those trends. Schooling does literally [re]produce the nation. I propose that Australian schooling, as framed by recent governments, can be mapped onto a diagram of authoritarian governing. Authoritarian government makes claims such as 'reality is what we say it is!' [even when it is a lie]; the future is inevitable [even through the present is always pregnant with potentials]; you are afraid and you need me. The Australian curriculum provides a case study on how reality is framed by schooling. The history and literacy wars and the recent struggle over STEM provide a grist for the mill here. Authoritarians also deflect attention away from social movement struggles, and the Australian curriculum provides an ur-text for how the nation maps out political struggle. Capitalism is not studied and neither are decades of social movement struggles, nor the way the Australian media works as

[3] Distinct from psychology as a complex field.

[4] https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/.

a political/pedagogical machine. Authoritarians undermine active forms of citizenship, and the Australian curriculum again is an ur-text. Importantly, possible futures are designed by only a few and the other alternatives are curtailed, undermined or worse. Authoritarian governing is a monologue; we get told how it is and what to do and we're not invited into the room where plans are made. Schooling in Australia now promotes, and through claims to science no less, that good teaching is a monologue. All we get from those governing is the demand for highly scripted anti-democratic pedagogies, explicit instruction, one-size-fits-all teaching methods or phonics fundamentalism. Just do schooling to students! But then there is a huge archive in education studies that maps a dialogic alternative. It is possible that teachers can co-construct learning in their classrooms, provide their students with opportunities to learn about what matters and engage in civic action that aims to make their communities better places to live. And it is only through learning how to be dialogic that we can learn how to live with differences, cultural, linguistic, religious and cosmological. Addressing the current challenges of our time and leading learning in solidarity with youth requires going beyond the present familiar landscape of individualised schooling and beyond a normalised hegemony of sameness. Now is not the time to strengthen the monologue; we really do need to learn how to live together through dialogue.

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