
 Transforming organisations and people

This silence is deafening – making curriculum transformative: A critical analysis of social justice and equity

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 I am an educator with 'passionate politics' (bell hooks)

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 **Critical questions**


- How can educators attempt to move practice and pedagogy to the next stages of social justice?
- What risks does this entail?
- How can a culture of social justice become spirited within an early childhood program?

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 **Critical question**

- What is **inclusion**?
- What is **curriculum**?
- What is **critical** education?
- What does it mean to **transform**?
- Are **inclusion** and **equity** the same or different?

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 **I think that we can't go around... measuring our goodness by what we don't do. By what we deny ourselves, what we resist, and who we exclude. I think... we've got to measure goodness by what we embrace, what we create... and who we include. - Pere Henri : Chocolat the Movie**

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Doing Aboriginality

Teacher is painting the face of Jessica (4 yrs), who is an Indigenous Australian, with Indigenous like dots in preparation for a dance performance. Natasha (4 yrs) who is also Indigenous is watching.

Natasha: (looking at Jessica) Jessica you looking like a Koori kid. (Looking at Teacher). Uncle your making Jessica look Koori.
Teacher: Yes I am painting Jessica's face, but I think Jessica is still a Koori Kid even without her face painted.
Natasha: No, you making her look like one.
Teacher: Like what?
Natasha: Koori.
Teacher: You are a Koori kid and you don't have paint on your face.
Natasha: No I'm not, you haven't painted dots yet.
Teacher: What difference will the dots make?
Natasha: Then I'll be a real Koori, so hurry up.

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Inclusion as


- Physical accessibility
- Allowing all children to participate
- Treating ALL children the same
- Seeking funding for children with diverse abilities
- Identifying discrimination
- Reflecting diversity
- Identifying power-relations and inequity and working towards addressing this

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Perhaps, just perhaps inclusion can mean...


- I always feel welcomed
- People understand that I am different but also the same as others
- People acknowledge that at times my identity presents a challenge to others who are different to me but you make me feel a part of the group
- I have advocates to support my identity and stand up for and with me
- Who I am is reflected across all aspects of the environment and curriculum
- You talk about who I am in a way that respects me and my family not just to me but the whole group
- You teach me about other forms of identity
- You challenge me to be fair and accepting of others
- I have an equal voice in the group
- You celebrate who I am as much as you celebrate others
- Me and my family are allowed to 'be' who we are without feeling threatened or ashamed

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 Education: transmitting values of...


"To educate as the **practice of freedom** is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach and **who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred**; who believe that to work is not merely to share information but **to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth** of our students. To teach in a manner that **respects and cares for the souls** of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (bell hooks, p.13, 1994)

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 Bell hooks reminds us

- To teach is a practice of freedom
- We believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred;
- We share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students.
- We respect and cares for the soul of our students

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 'one of the aims of education is to prepare citizens for the 'real world', and the 'real worlds' of today are multifaceted and often the issues that arise are not easily solved but instead need to have multiple readings and interpretations' (Kilberry, p 11)


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 **The role of wishing**

In the recent positive psychology daily Sean Doyle wrote


'Wishes touch on so many aspects of positive psychology. They play a role in appreciative inquiry, hope, resilience, savoring, purpose and goal setting just to name a few. That is because wishes tell us something about what it means to be human. They frame for us our vision of what is important – both those things that are "big!" Important that give us meaning and purpose, as well as the little pleasures and comforts that ease and aide us in our enjoyment of life. Wishes help us define a vision of what is possible and show us what life could be.' (2009)

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 While they are not the same thing as hope, our wishes have a hand in the motivation, passion and clear goals that make our hopes possible. When times are hard, sometimes wishes offer the comfort we need.

Of course, we are not always good at guessing what we want, or what will make us happy. As a result, sometimes we wish for the "wrong" things. But this too says something about who we are, and what it means to be human as we go about stammering and stumbling through life. Ultimately our wishes connect us to one another. No matter where you are from, or where you are going, when we hear the wishes of others, so often we realise that we are not alone in our dreams.'


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 What is your dream for children?

What is your dream for yourself?

What is your dream for early childhood education?

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On April 12, 2007, I asked 63 first graders at JY Joyner Elementary in Raleigh, NC, if they had one wish for the world, their families, or themselves, what would it be?

This is what they said.


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Struggles Of Social Justice


- Identifying and uncovering silent discourses and finding ways to narrate these stories within the curriculum
- Exploring personal biases and identifying approaches to help overcome these biases
- Identifying institutional racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism and creating safe spaces to work through these behaviours
- Exploring practices to work with young children in relation to diversity outside those confined to developmental norms and developmentally appropriate rhetoric, and
- Challenging predominant imagery and national ideology in an attempt to create a realistic picture of Australian society

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Honouring diversity means...

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Challenging inequity means...


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What is social justice

The belief in an equitable, compassionate world where difference is understood and valued, and where human dignity, the Earth, our ancestors and future generations are respected.


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Critical questions


- How do you define your approach to teaching and learning about diversity and difference?
- Does your curriculum challenge stereotypes and biases? If so, how so? If not, why not?
- Is it a sufficient pedagogical endeavour in challenging unfairness? If so, how so? If not, why not?

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'Rather I want to argue that too much of the contemporary curriculum brings a deathly silence to the being of childhood and not enough of it speaks to the things that really matter in children's lives or in the lives of those who care for them. I want to argue that the curriculum has too often become an injunction to desist rather than an invitation to explore our life worlds'. (Silin Pg 40)

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'The curriculum remains lifeless as long as it is cut off from the roots and connections that feed it. If teachers cannot find themselves or the things that are important to them in the curriculum, it is little wonder that students have difficulty responding to it. A commitment to the curriculum must entail a commitment to the world' (Pg 40 Silin)


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Critical Questions


- What happens when we don't speak up about diversity and discrimination?
- What do we document and what don't we document?
- What are the risks involved if we do?
- What are the risks involved if we don't?

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 Reflect

- In documentation and in our curriculum who is represented?
- What isn't said?
- Is that an issue?
- How does pedagogical documentation and its silences represent 'pasteurised' and 'homogenised' images of children?

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'...childhood is perceived and defined in opposition to what it means to be an adult, where the world of the child is considered to be care-free, innocent, immature and illogical in comparison to the logical, mature and burdensome world of the adult' (Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2000 pg 31)

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 Our passion for seeking the truth




Scully – in search of the truth through scientific discourses of knowledge

Mulder – a post modernist at heart, seeking to unravel the taken for granted




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 Children and difference: What adults might think


- Children don't notice difference
- Children are too young to 'know' about diversity
- Children don't understand what they are saying. They don't really mean it
- It is not the role of early childhood education to be teaching children about 'these' issues. It's the parents responsibility
- Children can't learn about these things, it will only spoil their childhood
- Parents won't like it if they find out we are talking about these issues with their child

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 Recognise that children are NOT born prejudice

- Understand prejudice is based on stereotypes, limited experiences and modeling
- Recognise that prejudice can be prevented and reduced
- Eliminate stereotypical images from your environment
- Expose children to human diversity
- Discuss stereotypical messages/images
- Model respectful relationships with people who are different from you
- Promote positive values, e.g. respect, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, community, etc.

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 Help children recognise and take action against unfair behaviour

- Help children recognise and take action against unfair behaviour
- Take time to seek out additional information, resources and support
- Make time for your own professional learning and development
- Work in partnership with families to utilise their expert knowledge of their child
- Maintain open and respectful communication with families
- Create a culture where asking questions is encouraged and valued

(Adapted from York, 2003, p30)

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"If we teach children to recognize injustice, then we must also teach them that people can create positive change by working together...Through activism activities, children build the confidence and skills for becoming adults who assert, in the face of injustice, "I have the responsibility to deal with it, I know how to deal with it, I will deal with it"

Louise Derman Sparks and the Anti-Bias Curriculum Task Force

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Deconstruction


- How do I understand my whiteness?
- What role does critical whiteness theory play in this situation?
- What has led to a hierarchy within identity?
- What is the role of curriculum?

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 **Seize the day!**

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." (Martin Luther King)

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