Keith Heggart
Steven Kolber *Editors*

Empowering Teachers and Democratising Schooling

Perspectives from Australia

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Keith: I would like to dedicate this book to my wife, Elizabeth, who continues to inspire me with her commitment to the students she teaches.

Steven: I would like to dedicate this book to my wife, Jemina, who is the heart of every room and the leader of every group, and Feliks, who has the world at his feet.

Foreword

Empowering Teachers for Education and Democracy

For well over a century, there has been an important relationship between democracy and education as a powerful social agent of change in contemporary liberal democratic societies. Writing in 1899, American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey argued that 'what the best and wisest parent wants for his [sic] own child, that must the community want for all of its children' (p. 19). Democracy has long sat at the heart of struggles for a more inclusive and caring education (Apple, 2018). However, as Mouffe (1993) cautioned, 'democracy is something uncertain and improbable and must never be taken for granted. It is an always fragile conquest that needs to be defended as well as deepened' (p. 6). While there are few who would contest the notion that young people should have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in education that nurtures and develops their critical and creative capacities, there are significant challenges facing democracy and education in the twenty-first century.

Along with Australian and international scholars and educators—many of whom are represented in this book—we have been interested in the question of how education can be for democracy (e.g., Riddle & Apple, 2019; Riddle & Heffernan, 2018; Riddle et al., 2022). When a planned summit on education and democracy was cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Keith and Steven reimagined their proposed symposium into a Teach Meet—a democratising event that enabled access for everyone, regardless of their location. This book is an important example of thinking differently about the complex questions being faced by schools and communities today.

The chapters within this book importantly recognise the complex challenges facing Australian teachers as workers in their own right. Hard-won labour conditions have been eroded in schools around the country, and teachers are reporting increasing rates of stress and burnout as a result of the intense and complex nature of their work (Heffernan et al., 2020). Additionally, there are substantial challenges facing teachers as they work towards more democratically oriented modes of education. Teachers have reported feeling concerned about addressing issues such as climate change, politics and social justice issues in their classrooms. Teachers have also reported feeling disheartened by negative media portrayals of their profession, alongside political proclamations of a lack of ‘quality’ teachers, which can be connected to an erosion of trust in the institution of schooling (Mockler, 2020; Shine, 2020).

It is impossible to write something in 2021 without acknowledging the enormous impact of COVID-19 on schooling and teachers’ work. While our own work has shown that those closest to schools delivering remote learning had an increased respect for teachers’ work during that time, teachers have reported feeling increased pressure, an intensification of workload, and feeling that they were being considered frontline workers without the protections associated with that position or responsibility. COVID-19 has laid bare the inequities in our societies, and the ramifications will continue to impact on our school communities for some time to come.

This is a critical moment for anyone interested in the issues of democracy and education. Between the impact of COVID-19, the climate crisis, and ongoing political discord within Australian society, teachers are confronting these questions every day as a matter of course in their work. This book is an important opportunity to understand the perspectives of teachers and education researchers, and to think about how we might move into a future where these questions are at the front and centre of the way we think about education in Australia.

Stewart Riddle
Amanda Heffernan
David Bright

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All teacher authors featured here. You all show excellence and elements of our great profession in different measures.

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About the Editors

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Keith is a former high school teacher, having worked as a school leader in Australia and overseas, in government and non-government sectors. In addition, he has worked as an Organiser for the Independent Education Union of Australia, and as an independent Learning Designer for a range of organisations.

Steven Kolber is a proud Public-school teacher who has been teaching English, History and English as an additional language for 12 years. He was recently named to the top 50 of the Varkey Foundation's Global Teacher prize. He is passionate about teacher collaboration which he supports through organising Teach Meets, running #edureading (an online academic reading group) and supporting Khmer teachers by leading teacher development workshops in Cambodia.

He leverages technology to share teaching ideas through the 'Teachers Educational Review' podcast and his own YouTube channel 'Mr. Kolber's Teaching'. He is especially interested in the future of Education and the role for democracy within emerging technological futures.

His writing has been published in The Age, by Education International, Australian Teacher Magazine, EducationHQ, The Educator Australia, in Professional Educator, Professional Voice, the Flipped Learning Review magazine, ACER's *Teacher,* ACEL's *Research in Action* series and the Australian Educator Magazine.

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Introduction

Steven Kolber and Keith Heggart

Abstract This introductory chapter sets out the scope and mean ideas present within the rest of the book. Drawing on the combined narrative of the editors, from both a teaching and academic perspective, the chapter begins by explaining the origins of this book, before seeking to situate it within wider debates about empowering teachers and the need for democratic education, both for schools and its role in wider society. As part of this, the innovative nature of the book—as a combination of the voices of teachers and researchers—is explained. For international readers, a brief description of the Australian education system is provided, as well as a useful summary of key terms from within the system.

1 The Beginning of an Idea

This book is the culmination of an educational and scholarly journey that has embraced the full gamut of technologies in order to realise the ideas within: most clearly the printing press in the form of this book (if you are holding a physical copy); the internet to facilitate online teach meets and to leverage connections made via social media; and online video streaming to make it accessible to an audience. It began as a planned conference session that then transformed into an online streamed event, before finally resolving into this book. The ideas that are presented here were originally conceived of as a presentation for the 2020 'Second Summit on Education for Democracy', organised by Stewart Riddle, Amanda Heffernan and David Bright (who kindly agreed to write the foreword). When this conference did not go ahead as planned due to COVID-19, we suggested instead using the emerging concept of an online Teach Meet as an alternative.

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Amid the COVID reality of 2020, face-to-face Teach Meets (Curwood & Biddoplh, 2017) had moved online, and we quickly recognised the advantages of this medium in terms of reach and scale. We organised an event and called for participants. The number of responses took us by surprise! The Teach Meet became ‘Challenging teacher bashing: The role of democracy in Australian schools’ and it was by far the most successful event of its kind. Unlike previous Teach Meets, this event touched on ideas not shared elsewhere, and moved beyond considerations of resources, practices or even pedagogies, and instead inquired into structures and underlying factors that influence teaching and the lives of teachers and their students. This Teach Meet was broader than the details of teaching Mathematics or English. It spoke to issues about the system, and the purpose of education as a whole, and the role of teachers within that system. At the conclusion of the Teach Meet, energised by the dynamism and determination demonstrated by the teachers and others in the presentations, we were inspired to keep the conversations alive, and to share them more widely: the end result of this is the book which you are now reading. While this book draws mainly from the perspectives of Australian teachers and academics, it has relevance far beyond Australia’s shores. The issues that teachers, schools and other educational institutions are dealing with in Australia are mirrored in countries like Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and many others. The research conducted by academics will be pertinent in these jurisdictions, and the accounts provided by teachers—of the struggles they face and their attempts to overcome them—will be recognisable to all educators. Through both of these aspects emerge the main themes of this book: empowering teachers and democratising schooling. To us, they are intrinsically linked. Schools are essential to the healthy functioning of democracies. That is hardly new. But in order for young people to learn to participate and even to lead in their society, it is necessary for teachers to be empowered and respected—and that is something that is endangered (or worse) in many jurisdictions today. Below, we discuss their relevance to the book as a whole.

2 Empowering Teachers

Discussions about the need to empower teachers is not new. This usually takes the form of an academic seminar far removed from the practice of teaching, and the schools and sites where it takes place. Many edu-gurus, edu-celebrities and academics speak of the need to empower teachers—although sometimes what is meant by that term is not clear. In contrast, universities, unions and professional organisations are comparatively reluctant to make these claims, as they have significant costs associated with them. By contrast, the aforementioned speakers and thinkers can provide this idea as a fait accompli, as easy to achieve, as it is to say out loud. In short, the idea is not uncommon, but on almost all occasions, the teachers are oddly absent from these discussions. Teachers are often talked about, but rarely are they talked *with.*

Part of this is caused by the constant appetite for new ideas. In education, this is often called ‘faddism’, and its effect upon educational practices has been decidedly unhelpful. It is characterised by the constant search for new voices and perspectives often from other fields. Within education, this invitation to new voices is rarely extended to teachers themselves. To us, as researchers and teachers, this seems a rather strange oversight. A simple example illustrates this: 'Teacher Voice' is constantly written about, but not often by teachers (Cohn & Kottkamp, 1993).

In putting together this edited collection, we made a conscious decision to include the voices of teachers, and we were inspired by pieces of writing and scholarship that had done similar work. In addition, in a small way, we see that by including these teachers in this book, we are undertaking to empower them through the process of them being written and published. For this reason, we greatly appreciate the work of our superb teacher and academic authors who have proven willing to engage with a process that, for some, was unfamiliar.

3 Empowered Scholarship

However, perhaps the absence of teachers from these discussions is beginning to change. While this book is certainly part of it, it is part of a wider corpus of recent scholarship which does give primacy to teachers' voices as well as researchers interested in supporting their work and empowerment. The following examples provide a means to explore publications of a similar theme that features teachers' voices, and notes how they sit alongside this volume.

The closest example, and one which will be explored further, is the 'Flip the System' series of books (Kneyber & Evers, 2014, 2015; Netolicky, Andrews & Paterson, 2018; Dutaut & Rycroft-Smith, 2018; Soskil, 2021). With a focus on promoting teachers into leadership positions, this series brought together a range of voices, including many teachers as first-time authors. Importantly, these books foregrounded the voices of teachers, and were written in a way that was meant to be accessible for teachers. In many ways, these books were 'teachers talking to teachers about teaching'—and they have much to recommend them. This book has a similar approach, but we recognise that change will not be solely the responsibility of teachers and school leaders; rather it must include the wider community, and that means education academics, initial teacher education providers, parents and others. We have sought to include all of these voices.

Another approach has been to seek to empower teachers by enhancing their practice and sharing those good practices more widely. This is difficult—after all, the saying goes that in education, 'everything works somewhere, and nothing works everywhere'! Perhaps one of the most notable proponents of this has been Ron Ritchart's trio of books: 'Creating Cultures of Thinking' (2015); 'Making Thinking Visible' (2011); and 'The power of making thinking visible: Practices to engage and empower all learners' (2020). Each of these explores teaching strategies, through providing vignettes of, and space for, teachers applying these strategies to outline their work. It foregrounds teachers' voices—but in a way that is mediated through an academic and practical voice. This filtering serves a purpose in Ritchart's work, but we believe that the frustration and annoyance of teachers' experience is as much a part of understanding what is required to empower teachers as their practice, and hence we've sought to present teachers' voices in an unvarnished fashion.

Other volumes have examined teachers as leaders within education settings. For example, Barnett Berry, ('Teacherpreneurs: innovative teachers that lead, but don't leave', 2011 and 'Teaching 2030: What we must do for our students', 2013) outlines the approaches of superb teachers and leaders by providing an overview of the policies that support them; he has also been able to give them voice, through writing, and showcased their excellence.

Specific people who manage to balance teaching roles with academic and non-academic outputs (including those within this book) are a rare breed, and serve as part of inspiration for this book. Notable examples include Armand Doucet (Doucet, et al., 2018; Hollweck & Doucet, 2020) and Deborah Netolicky (2019, 2020), among others. Doucet's, 'Teaching in the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Standing at the Precipice' (Doucet, 2018) is a book entirely authored by teachers and teacher-leaders within education. We, the editors, have closely followed, and indeed, worked on research in line with the ideas of pracademia. This idea is not new, but is less commonly discussed within education. We find great possibility in this idea as a way to build upon the idea of the teacherpreneur (Berry, 2013) as a model of teachers that teach, lead beyond their schools, and also engage with policy and research. We take note of the complex ask that this idea entails, and do not shy away from the need to recognise the significant changes in working conditions that would be required to make possible for more than a small number of practitioners. In order to examine these ideas more closely, our book has chapters exploring the role of unions and their role in the (hopefully) continued and growing empowerment of teachers.

Of particular note are the 'Empowering Educators' series of books (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), which critique education and the impact of the dominant, competitive, market-driven logic of neoliberal thinking. The series provides vignettes from 'high-performing schools' around the world, including Finland (Hammerness, et al., 2017), Canada (Campbell, et al., 2017), Singapore (Goodwin, et al., 2017) and, most relevant, Australia (Burns & McIntyre, 2017) noting how each system shapes high-quality teaching. We don't disagree with the idea of raising teacher quality, or indeed making systems more 'high-performing', but rather we are interested in the roles of individuals as well as systems. As a teacher, working with students, you are asked to raise students' results, improve their learning, and indeed welcome their thinking into the classroom in a way akin to intellectual equals. All of these are noble aims, but as Polly Dunning outlines in Chapter 2, the constant striving for improvement of students and the 'learnification' (Biesta, 2010) of the teaching profession leaves the many professional and committed individuals that make up the system strangely overlooked and above all, disempowered. While we support changes in policy, and shifts in leadership constructs, this book also recognises these shifts as complex, long-lagging indicators, and most of all, beyond the realm of most teachers. Working alongside structural changes, we must also look for teachers to become empowered in a way that might support these actions, and make them more possible, but also prove successful if these changes do not occur.

4 Combining Different Voices

The original conference session looked to combine the voices of teachers and academics. This idea was further developed through the use of social media and mobile technologies in the online Teach Meet. That event, in part because of the fact that it was online and easily accessible, attracted Australia's leading education commentator and author, Jane Caro, as well as former New South Wales Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli and academics like Deborah Netolicky and Marc Pruyn—many of whom might never have been able to attend the original conference. And, of course, it included the voices of many, many teachers, who would have faced significant challenges should they have wished to attend the conference. There was also the audience who watched the presentations and engaged in the discussions; this audience was orders of magnitude larger than that which would have been present at the conference.

The combination of teachers' and academics' voices is worth noting, too: while this may not sound outlandish or even unusual, the inclusion of teachers on the same platform and at the same status as academics is simply something that does not happen often within Australia's educational arenas. There are very few events that place teachers in the same domain as those who hold sway over the education space within which teachers work: in many ways, teachers are excluded from the control and direction of their own profession. In this book, we have sought to remedy this. Teachers' voices are provided beyond merely being survey-takers, actors in vignettes, de-identified data points or recipients of research findings. We position teachers as change agents and active and powerful voices within and beyond their 'natural habitat' of the classroom. By doing this, we model one aspect and approach to empowering teachers and through the teacher chapters, it is possible to explore many more.

The democratic technology of social media made these connections possible and was crucial in their assembly, though we are mindful that these technologies many not always be as 'social' as they claim, and indeed, possess the possibility of doing the opposite (Torphy, et al., 2020). The concept of a Teach Meet is perhaps the most democratic of technologies, featuring short presentations and equality of voices as its core elements. The media of a live video stream, produced entirely through free and replicable approaches, made accessibility to a broad audience possible. Each of these technologies existed against the backdrop of COVID and lockdowns within some states of Australia, making these tools not just desirable but essential for an event to occur. Arguably, this event occurred at a crucial time in the education landscape, where there was much to discuss, including the fact that the dominant 'teacher-bashing' narrative had been overturned due to the pandemic and teachers were being briefly venerated for their stoicism during lockdown. It was also before 'zoom fatigue' had fully taken hold of the public imagination and there was a sense of novelty and excitement involved in bringing together diverse voices.

The shift from this context to a book precluded a number of tweaks. Most obviously, the purposefully incendiary title became the more positively framed 'Empowering Teachers and Democratising Schooling: Perspectives from Australia'. While we felt that a provocative title was suitable for a Teach Meet, we wanted to frame the chapters within this book in a more positive light; hence the name change. Some speakers were unable to participate in the project and others were invited—or requested to join the project. However, one element that persists is the different perspectives and the differences in the way each of these is delivered. Within this volume, you will notice an uneven tone, and differing levels of 'academiciness' among the chapters, which reflects the different groups represented within this book. As they say in software development, 'This is not a bug. It's a feature'. Our intention in presenting these different voices is to try to bridge the gap that exists between practice and academia; in this instance, we are seeking to find a shared language of discussion, rather than a retreat into 'teacher talk' and 'academic-ese', with no connection between the two.

We believe the authors presenting their ideas here are examples of empowered teachers (even should they not be in a classroom), able to find spaces within existing policies and practices to develop their own ideas. Indeed, one could make the argument (and we do) that the process of writing for this book is both an example of empowerment, and a mechanism for that empowerment. Yet, such empowerment does not come without struggle. We propose that these teachers are empowered almost in spite of the system that often seems to actively work against their empowerment and realisation as full-fledged professionals. We see in these individuals some examples of the excellence that already exist within our system—not merely as proposed future manifestations for improvements, but the voices of the futures of schooling, actively contributing to it as they speak and share their ideas through writing. The teacher authors in this book are the vanguard of a new group of teachers, academics and leaders, who will shape and continue to contribute to the education system that they all value so highly.

It is important to note that, while a worthwhile goal, teacher empowerment is hardly the end point. Indeed, it is more correctly the mechanism by which we will achieve the ultimate goal we are seeking—a more democratic schooling experience, and through that, a more democratic society, founded on principles of justice and equality. Of course, these are very bold goals, and are perhaps not achievable within current socio-political contexts. Nevertheless, they are hardly new, either. The history between education and the fostering of democratic culture has a long history, and within Australia, there has been a role for civics and citizenship education since before Federation. It has long been recognised that democracy is fragile and tenuous; it must be protected, and the best way to protect it is through careful and ongoing education, especially among young people. Yet, for much of this discussion about what is variously termed civics and citizenship education, democratic education or something else, the focus has been on topics like student agency, student voice, the mechanisms of government and other forms of political education. There have been many books written about the value of different pedagogical approaches (see Heggart, 2021, for example), yet what is often overlooked is the need for teachers to be agents of democratic education as well. That is, teachers need to be engaged and empowered in order to realise the democratic potential of schooling.

There is, in teaching, a risk of insularity that calls for empowerment, that calls for teachers to look beyond their classroom. As Hallinger (2005) noted: 'despite 25 years of research and focus on instructional leadership, the classroom doors appear to remain as impermeable as a boundary line for 2005 as in 1980' (p. 231). This quote is drawn from leadership research, but across all settings, there appears a sense of the 'retreating to the classroom', of ineffective and ignored leadership that leads teachers to focus solely upon 'their students, in their classroom'. This is, in many ways, an understandable outcome for a deprofessionalised and disempowered profession, but is also something, perhaps the core thing, that needs to be overcome on the path to teacher empowerment. As a result of this sensation, there is also a sense of disengagement with academia, consultancy and many other pathways for new ideas to be injected into schools. This academic-practitioner divide is so significant, and so fraught with problems that it is worthy of further study, exploring the intricacies and relational power dynamics that make this a reality, but that is beyond the bounds of this particular project.

5 Democratising Schools

The second theme of this book is about the role that schools play as nurseries of democratic thought, action and, most importantly, citizens. This idea can be traced back to John Dewey's work (1916), and indeed, Classical times and, as stated above, civics and citizenship education has been a central concern for educational policymakers in Australia for more than one hundred years. This is particularly clear in the Alice Spring (Mparntwe) Declaration (2019), which states that one of the fundamental goals of Australian Schooling is the development of active and informed members of the community. Yet, the nature of this civics and citizenship education, and the best way to teach it, remains a contested space and one that is becoming increasingly urgent as democracy appears to be under attack in many different settings, including the rise of populist figures, the development of what John Keane describes as The New Despotism (Keane, 2020) and perhaps most concerningly, suggestions of increasing apathy towards democracy and active citizenship among young people (Foa & Mounk, 2016).

International scholarship has suggested possible avenues to remedy this. Principally, young people that are involved in community activities (and activism) are more likely to exhibit greater civic literacy and also are more likely to be active members of their community. In other words, one of the best ways to engender not only a knowledge of democratic and civil society but also a willingness to contribute to it is through providing and nurturing opportunities for young people to practise these skills—and clearly the school has a significant role to play in this (Heggart, 2021).

This is the ideal, but the reality is increasingly challenging, in Australia and internationally. Schools and schooling have become increasingly market-driven and top-down. There are increased demands about what and how teachers should teach, stripping away professionalism and leaving instrumentality. In some cases, teachers are increasingly being replaced by books of instructions or mobile devices that supposedly anybody can use to teach. These strictures meant that opportunities to explore contextual, democratic-facing activities are becoming less common for both teachers and students. We consider the challenges posed by a lack of experience with the process of democracy within these formative moments that represent a significant part of young people's life experiences.

Holloway and Hedegaard (2021, p. 7) capture this central concept, noting that within Danish schools (Folkeskolen), the logic followed is, 'if the school was to democratise pupils, then it needed to be democratic itself'. This is an idea we support within this book, contrasting the neoliberal and business ideas that continue to encroach and take root within the psyche and practices of schools. For every school that views their leadership as 'line managers', invoking Taylorist ideas and business logics, there is a swing away from teachers as craftspeople, tradespeople and their work as for the 'common good'. We posit that the way around this persistent assault upon schools and schooling is not to 'flip the system' (Kneyber, 2014; Netolicky et al., 2018, etc.), by upending or revolutionising it, necessarily but rather equip generations of teachers to be aware of these trends, and through their own empowerment change their role within the system and, so doing, advocate for the changes they want as active agents therewith.

In modern, populist educational discourse, there remains the indelible false dichotomy of the 'traditional' and the 'progressive' approaches to education. We note the many flaws within this distinction, including the way it pits teachers against one another, something we expressly avoid, but also for the manner that each classification contains so many concepts. For example, a progressive approach, which we favour, contains elements of the technological, flipped learning, online instruction and remote teaching, as these terms have been co-opted by big Ed-Tech. What we propose here is a vision for progressive education system that focuses on democratic ideals as its north star. We propose that the other dichotomy worthy of exploration is neoliberalism versus democracy, equity and collective divide (as exemplified by Public schools, but not only them). More simply wrought, the idea of the individual as predominant, or the collective. We seek a progressive, democratic education as inclusive and valuing of students from all backgrounds and experiences—as these enrich the discussion, centred around students rather than teachers 'right or wrong' assumptions and understandings of knowledge.

6 Australian Perspectives

This book is populated with reflections from Australian teachers and academics. This is hardly surprising. The Teach Meet which stimulated this book was an Australian affair, and that is the space in which we, as educators and researchers, feel most comfortable. It is for this reason that the book's subtitle includes the words Australian Perspectives. Having said that, the context of these reflections and the insights within the chapters have importance internationally. Of course, every education system has its own peculiarities and complexities. Even in Australia, there are significant and often frustrating differences between states and territories and between public and non-government schools. A forensic examination of these differences is not the intention of this book; rather, we have chosen to elide discussion of the differences and instead focus on the commonalities. We do this confident in the idea that these commonalities—time and workload pressures, the status of teachers, the challenges of leadership and professional learning—are relevant in all Australian contexts, and well beyond Australia's shores. A brief survey of recent international research supports this: for example, teacher workload is an issue in the UK (Jerrim & Sims, 2021), teacher status is of significant concern in the US (Garcia & Weiss, 2019) and the role of leaders in professional learning is being actively studied in South Korea, Singapore and Japan (Kim & Lee, 2020).

More broadly speaking, Holloway and Hedegaard (2021) outline the challenges to the Australian and Danish systems, they note: datafication; standardisation; and marketisation as key features, these forces are dominant as part of the Global Education Reform Movement (Ravitch, 2020; Sahlberg, 2020, 2021) that seeks to standardise and homogenise education worldwide. Global actors such as the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the World Bank are able to apply significant influence in this respect. This homogenisation is something that we feel has been overblown, in its importance, but something that proves useful for books of this type.

While some of the acronyms and nomenclature may be different, the forces that guide the levers of policy and teaching practice will be very familiar to an international audience—and the suggestions contained within this book will be applicable in all of these settings. Nevertheless, in order to familiarise international readers with some of the particulars of Australian education, a brief summary is provided below.

7 A brief introduction to the Australian Education System

Even to educators working within it, The Australian education system is notoriously complex. Ostensibly, each state or territory is responsible for the administration of their own education system, but increasingly the federal government is intervening, either through funding arrangements, or through the development and implementation of a national curriculum. Although the Australian Curriculum was agreed to by all states, the larger states like New South Wale and Victoria have adapted the curriculum to their needs, while other states have adopted it completely.

Within each state, there are a mix of different education providers. There are both government and privately run early childhood centres and pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary and further education providers, which include universities, registered training organisations (RTOs) and trade schools (often called TAFEs for Technical and Further Education). Schools can be either selective (i.e. catering to academically or otherwise gifted students), single-sex or standard. In addition, there are public schools (largely funded by the state government), and non-government schools (which receive significant monies from the federal government but also charge parents fees for students to attend). These cater for diverse religious groups, most notably Catholics, Anglicans, Muslims and Jews, as well as parents seeking the opportunities provided by these schools. Funding of these schools is a contentious issue.

Schooling is compulsory in Australia until the age of 15 or 16 (it depends on the jurisdiction). At that point, students can choose to leave school, or to continue further education with a view to entering university. Most universities in Australia are publicly funded, although there are a number of private universities, too. Students that leave often attend a TAFE or other RTOs to develop a trade.

Teachers in Australia are required to undertake at least a Bachelor's degree. For primary school teachers, this is often a Bachelor of Education. For high school teachers, they might have a degree in another subject, and then undertake a Master's of Education or Master's of Teaching. In order to qualify as a teacher, pre-service teachers must meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs) at a graduate level, and then, within a certain time period, compile a portfolio demonstrating that they have met the APSTs at a higher level—that of proficient. There are further levels of accreditation, but these are voluntary. Recently, teachers have been required to continue to demonstrate that they have maintained their proficiency in the form of ongoing professional development. Again, the details differ from state to state, but essentially teachers need to show that they have undertaken 20 h of professional development each year, some of which must be through a registered provider.

Arguments about the divisions and the complexity within the Australian education system are well-rehearsed, and we don't intend to repeat them here. However, we do want to note that, as stated by some of the authors in this volume, education itself is in a constant state of flux, with review after interminable review being announced. In addition, teachers themselves are often considered to be 'low-status' and excluded from these conversations. And Australian education is characterised by pockets of excellence as well as significant areas of concern. Such has characterised concern about Australia's performance in international tests. According to one 2000 report into PISA, Australia's education system is best characterised as 'high quality but low equity'.

8 COVID-19 and its Effects

This book is both a product of COVID, and also consciously puts it to one side. In many ways, the book was only made possible by the upheaval and reconfiguration brought about by the pandemic. On a purely structural level, for teachers in lockdown, and unable to travel, the pull of contributing to the academic literature was especially compelling, while it also, conversely, pushed out timelines and made the publication of this volume more complex.

In terms of its effects upon the educational landscape, COVID has threatened, and continues to threaten, teachers' well-being (Shirley et al., 2020; Waters et al., 2021; White & McCallum, 2021), while simultaneously testing and reinforcing the role of schooling. Certainly, many parents found a new respect for teachers after their experiences with remote online learning. Another effect of COVID that is noted by a number of the authors in this volume, is that COVID-19 brought teachers and educators much closer to the influence of the media. Not surprisingly, within a media climate that shuns teachers and relies on lazy tropes of types of teachers, this had a further disempowering and stress-inducing impact (Baroutsis, 2018; Shine, 2018, 2020; Shine & Rogers, 2021). As a result, there is a clear theme of media representation within those chapters written by teachers. In one way, teachers saw this book as an opportunity to speak back to the dominant teacher-critical voices that were present in much of the media before and during the pandemic.

The pandemic also highlighted the efforts of many teachers who exhibited similar traits to those featured in this book, in particular, teachers who leverage networks, social media platforms and a myriad range of approaches to lead and influence beyond their schools. The traditional vision of a teacher or leader deeply contextualised and knowledgeable within their own setting—and ignorant beyond it—seems even further challenged by the types of social disruption wrought by the pandemic.

Despite the disruption caused by the pandemic, some of the authors have chosen to not directly address COVID. This makes sense: vision of teacher empowerment was in many respects put to one side as 'too hard' amid the unprecedented changes and new demands placed on teachers by the pandemic. In these cases, these chapters allow teachers to refocus and reiterate the goal of teacher empowerment and democratising schooling upon the 'ending' and cessation of COVID-related turmoil.

As Zhao & Watteron (2021) noted, 'The COVID-19 pandemic has caused both unprecedented disruptions and massive changes to education. However, as schools return, these changes may disappear' (p. 1). This is something that we feel has occurred, supported by the earlier predictions of Sahlberg (2020), we feel changes occur best when reached through logic and strategy rather than as knee-jerk responses to evolving crises. We echo Sahlberg's (2021) titular question: 'Does the pandemic help us make education more equitable?' adding perhaps: is there space for a more democratic education system? In this volume, we seek to outline how this is possible and why it is important.

9 Not More, but Different: Locating this Volume Within the Field

The proposals and potential solutions we propose here may seem at points 'highfalutin', or obtuse, but the idea is not merely an endless addition of new concepts into teaching. Rather, we propose that within the time allowable and accessible for teachers that they connect with others and reflect on their own practice. For this reason, the base conditions of these possibilities outlined above are important. Within the connection with others and the reflection, we trust teachers will come to include democratic processes within their teaching and dealings with other teacher stakeholders. This vision of empowered teachers involves aspects of Sachs (2000) 'activist professionalism' and 'democratic professionalism' which involve collaboration and engaging with multiple stakeholders, including academics. However, it notes that for the majority of teachers, development of confidence and empowerment within their own schools, online, at union events, or at subject association gatherings will often be required first. Simply put, teachers are disempowered and overlooked to such an extent beyond the level of schooling that they need to be developed and encouraged by any who would engage with this work. The proposal of this book is to do things differently, not to simply do more.

We propose that teachers, driven by a common and collective purpose, when led well, are able to exist in non-hierarchical structures, engage in more level, even and flat, democratic structures. But that this is difficult while they work within layers and layers of hierarchical systems, byzantine administrations and departments.

We propose that currently empowered teachers who are able to exceed the boundaries and restrictions of their systems are the exception rather than the rule, existing within the gaps or margins between policies (Reid, 2011), rather than being trusted to enact, or freed by, policies. We are glad to showcase many teachers of this type within this volume, bringing together the ways in which they craft niches from within these gaps and margins.

10 Silences with this Narrative

Within this volume, there are notable absences that might be expected to be included, and indeed that we would have liked to have included. While we have made efforts to include a diverse range of voices within this book, we acknowledge that some voices have not been included.

We have not explicitly included the voice of parents within this volume, though many of our authors hold the dual role of both teachers *and* parents. We propose, after the process of teacher empowerment continues apace, that the inclusion explicitly of parents and parents' voice will become more common. The ongoing process of empowerment for teachers within education flows naturally into the realm of parents and students, but perhaps it is too early for that. As part of this, we anticipate displacing the narrative that often places teachers and parents as adversaries and instead suggesting a more collaborative approach.

This book does not include the voices of students. Again, this is an omission that is necessary to remedy; this volume cannot do everything! Rather, this volume is the first step in broadening discourse about education to include teachers; future iterations and similar works should, and we hope, will, include the voices of students. Broadly speaking, this shift is already occurring: from the focus upon the principal and principalship, moving down towards middle leaders, and within this volume, and the others outlined above, the focus appears to be including the lived experience of classroom teachers. The next step should be the inclusion of student voices.

As an Australian-centric volume, we note Australia's fraught colonial history and the ongoing process of post-colonial dispossession of Indigenous Australians. During the Teach Meet, Indigenous perspectives were presented, but upon the pivot to this book, we were unable to retain these voices, despite our best efforts. Indeed, the Teach Meet was explicitly called out by an individual for the 'whiteness' (or in this case whiteness, and 'white passing') makeup of the panel, and we recognise the validity of this criticism. This was acknowledged and we invited and encouraged Indigenous voices to contribute to the volume; unfortunately, we were not able to achieve this. This is a failing of the book, and also a challenge to those who publish to heed our call for greater inclusion of the above voices.

11 A Note on Acronyms

The seemingly ever-increasing complexity and intensifying work of teachers and teaching has meant that acronyms now dictate the lives of workers within the education space. Engaging with international education, and Australian education specifically, cannot be done without leveraging a range of acronyms. For clarity for our readers, we have provided a glossary of acronyms and to what they refer, this will be especially useful for those readers not familiar with Australian education and the nuances of policies and practices within.

Tests

PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment
PISA-D - Programme for International Student Assessment for Development
NAPLAN - National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
TIMSS - Trends in Mathematics and Science Study

Policies

APST - Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
HALT - Highly Accomplished Lead Teacher programme

Organisations

AITSL - Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
NCEE - National Commission on Excellence in Education
VIT - Victorian Institute of Teaching
NESA - New South Wales Education Standards Authority
AEU - Australian Education Union
NSWTF - New South Wales Teachers Federation
IEU - Independent Education Union
NBCT - National Board-Certified Teachers
CTQ - Centre for Teaching Quality
ACARA - Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

School-Leaving Certificates

HSC - High School Certificate
VCE - Victorian Certificate of Education
ATAR - Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking

Common Acronyms

ITE - Initial Teacher education
MYLNS - Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy Support initiative
LGBTI - Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Intersex
PEP - Professional Experience Programs
PSTs - Pre-service Teachers
ECTs - Early Career Teachers
QILTS - The Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching Survey
SES - Student Experience Surveys
PD - Professional Development
PL - Professional Learning
SAMR - Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition
STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

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He leverages technology to share teaching ideas through the 'Teachers Educational Review' podcast and his own YouTube channel 'Mr Kolber's Teaching'. He is especially interested in the future of Education and the role for democracy within emerging technological futures. His writing has been published in The Age, by Education International, Australian Teacher Magazine, EducationHQ, The Educator Australia, in Professional Educator, Professional Voice, the Flipped Learning Review magazine, ACER's *Teacher*, ACEL's *Research in Action* series and the Australian Educator Magazine.

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Keith is a former high school teacher, having worked as a school leader in Australia and overseas, in government and non-government sectors. In addition, he has worked as an Organiser for the Independent Education Union of Australia, and as an independent Learning Designer for a range of organisations.

Challenges and Possibilities for Teacher Empowerment

The challenges to teacher empowerment are many and numerous. This book opens by foregrounding the voices of teachers—honest, reflective and powerful—as they consider what these challenges mean to them and their work in Australian schools. The chapters within this section identify the key themes and forces that are sweeping the educational context in Australia, and they are certain to be commonalities among the international community too. The teachers writing here also examine the ways that those in the profession are either positioned or marginalised by the dominant discourses. These are not easy reading; nor are they the uplifting narratives one might expect to open a volume entitled 'empowering teachers'. However they are the realities that many teachers face, and thus we felt that these accounts needed to be the starting point for future discussions of the possibilities of teacher empowerment that follow.

Perhaps chief among the forces that shape this milieu is neoliberalism. This is a phrase that is revisited numerous times within this volume by both the teacher contributors and others. Neoliberalism is a useful catch-all phrase that contains within it many practices that work counter to the intentions and values of a secular, democratic education system. It can take the form of managerialist leadership approaches that remove teachers from leadership—and leadership from teaching. It can be embodied through practices informed by policies that disempower teachers and by doing so, also limit the agency of students to act as citizens. It can inform the media coverage of teachers that directly impacts upon the profession's views of itself and informs the relentless bashing of it. While there is less analysis of how neoliberal policies has come to be in part one, there is a clear focus on the ways that it has impacted the practice of teaching.

Not all challenges to teacher empowerment are restricted to neoliberal thinking, and indeed many of the challenges are contained entirely within the profession itself. As difficult as teaching, it is sometimes made even more difficult by teachers themselves. A common expression and trope within education is that 'If I leave teaching, it will be because of the adults, not the children'. This idea is pervasive and speaks to the disregard and distaste that many teachers have towards their colleagues and the professionalism shown within their collegial spaces. Here, we learn of the ways that the adults within a learning organisation can be both supporters, collaborators and the agents of improvement. We also consider the way that teachers disempower and divide themselves, for this places limits on teacher confidence and agency.

It is crucial for teachers to be aware of these kinds of challenges so that they can best recognise and respond to them when they emerge within their own settings. A consideration of these challenges and forces allows the educated teacher to feel less disempowered.

Another key element of empowerment within schools is the role of parents and carers, as well as the broader community. The perception of these groups is especially impactful upon teacher confidence and those systems most lauded internationally are those where trust underlines the role of teachers.

The role of the media, though external to schools, remains impactful there. Indeed, a morning of reading the news will often leave any teacher feeling challenged and less empowered than almost any other routine. The media negatively impacts and shapes parents' and carers' perceptions of the profession and the system, which further undermine that relationship and create additional workload as a result of this breakdown. Teachers are receiving the brunt of these depictions, and as a result some among their ranks feel the need to contribute to, or participate in the news cycle, putting forward alternative perspectives and viewpoints.

Polly Dunning provides a harrowing and uplifting account of what it means to be a teacher, including the ways that the media impacts upon levels of teacher confidence and empowerment, as well as the real, tangible and statistically notable effect of these influences upon teachers' mental health and overall well-being. She describes both problem and possible solution, suggesting that teachers need to wade through the media noise and locate their intentional core to maintain passion and to become, or remain, empowered.

Bec West provides a guide to those divisions that separate the teaching profession. She sheds light on those reasons that teachers find to exclude, bully and overlook one another sourced from a range of small and narrow distinctions and differences. She proposes ways that teachers might be more inclusive and welcoming to their own and rise above these petty divisions.

George Lilley presents the case study of John Hattie, as education policy entrepreneur and 'educelebrity'. This case study shows both a personage worthy of closer attention and monitoring, while also providing an overview of the manner in which the education narrative is shaped by actors outside of the core work. He provides a series of activist processes and procedures that can be followed to challenge and address a narrative of this nature.

Steven Kolber outlines, in broad strokes, issues around teacher recruitment, retention, and leadership. He notes those groups and organisations who seek to support empowered teachers and proposes ways that teachers may work individually and collaboratively to empower themselves and one another.

A Profession Under Pressure: How Squeezing Teachers Punishes Kids

Polly Dunning

Abstract This chapter examines what it means to be a teacher and the challenges faced by the profession from an insider perspective: that of a practising teacher. Through a careful consideration of both the way teachers work has changed, or is changing, and the pressures that are part of that, as well as the way teachers are presented in the media and perceived in the wider community, it explores the ebbs and flows in energy and enthusiasm, and how those outside the profession have a direct influence upon teachers' passion for their job. This chapter describes how these assaults 'squeeze' teachers, which in turn pressure their students, leading to a range of negative outcomes. The connection between pressures on teachers and less satisfactory learning outcomes is made clear. The role that the media plays in the popular conception of teachers is explored and how these unrealistic, and negative depictions ultimately impact upon students are called into question. The chapter concludes with a call to refocus upon the core tenets of education, and the simple, clear and humanistic goals set afoot the teachers that make such positive impacts upon their charges.

1 The Societal Goals of Education and the Personal Realities of Teachers

Equal access to free, high-quality, secular, universal education is something I like to think Australians can all get behind. It's a bit of a no-brainer. Education is the fundamental right of every child in a democracy. And it's a value deeply held by teachers the world over. Teachers believe in the right of every child to the best education available. We chose our career to be part of facilitating that education; to nurture and encourage and explore with our students. We advocate for our students, for fair funding, and for our communities, and we guide their development of knowledge and learning.

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As a teacher in New South Wales schools for over a decade, and as a parent of two young children, I have the privilege to see the lengths teachers will go for their students; the deep emotional, intellectual, and philosophical ties we feel to our students as individuals, to our school communities, and to the broader purpose of education. Every day, when I drop my children at school and see how their teachers greet them with care and enthusiasm for the day ahead, and when I arrive at my own school workplace and feel the heady buzz of caffeine, determination, and excitement pulsing through the hallways, I am reminded of the passion of teachers. And of the importance of the work we do.

We love our students and value our work, but we are tired. We are a profession rife with burnout and exhaustion and stress (OECD, 2020; Safe Work Australia, 2013; Stapleton et al., 2020). And it is leading to widespread demoralisation of a workforce desperate to serve our community and our children. When I interact with schools and teachers, I see that too.

2 A Mammoth—and Changing—Task

A couple of years ago, I bumped into a colleague at a conference and she said something that really stuck with me. She said, "I feel like there was a time when I was teaching kids to learn in the system and with the system, now I feel like I'm teaching them to learn despite it. Our role has changed. It is our job to protect them from the system. To take the blows the system seeks to land and to do it with a smile on our face and music in our soul".

What a mammoth task. But I think it is sometimes how many of us feel. Ours is a system of education that has become so caught up with measurement and data trends and standardised scores that it seems to have forsaken the very parts of education that make it work: joy, curiosity, personal connections, laughter, mastery, community. Nationally, students are graded in standardised tests in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 through the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). They must achieve a hurdle grade in the National Minimum Standards tests in Reading, Writing, and Numeracy which are available from Year 10, and are graded in high-stakes school-leaving exams that vary between states. In New South Wales (NSW) and South Australia (SA), students in Year 1 are now tested for reading, and many systems also test students at entry to primary school, again at entry to secondary school, and often again to determine entry to selective schools, streams, and classes. Schools and teachers are set test result improvement targets, expected to provide ever-increasing co-curricular activities and enrichment programmes, required to collect, annotate, collate, and analyse growing amounts data on student progress, spend more and more of their own time on mandated, but not necessarily useful, professional development and to compete against other local schools for enrolments.

In a system that is so concerned with testing and pushing and continuous improvement and productivity and accountability, it can be difficult to feel like it is working *with* you, like it's working for the same ideals of education you are. And working *against* the system is exhausting.

This is what leads to demoralisation and to serious negative impacts on teachers' health. And anything that hurts teachers, hurts their students too. As parents, the health of teachers is something we should all be mindful of. Protecting the people who spend the most time with our kids is the best way for us to protect them.

3 The Impacts of the Current System Upon Teachers' Health and Well-Being

In 2013, Safe Work Australia found that school teachers have one of the highest rates of claim for work-related mental stress in the country, and the majority of those claims were for work pressures (Safe Work Australia, 2013). In 2018, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (OECD, 2020) found that Australian teachers are more stressed than their international counterparts, with 58% of us feeling "quite a bit" or "a lot" of stress compared to the OECD average of 49%. About a quarter of us feel our job has a negative impact on our mental health, and 20% of us feel it damages our physical health. And we spend far more time than almost all other OECD teachers on administrative tasks, which was identified as a major source of stress.

Workplace pressure seems to be increasing across many industries—just look at how much unpaid overtime most Aussies do (Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute, 2019) —but the work of teachers and other caring professions has a different effect on those who are called to do it. We teach and work so hard because we have a deep love and commitment to our students, and a sense of duty to inspire them and teach them well. We have an emotional enthusiasm for our job and for making a real and lasting difference for children and young people. And if that is compromised, what we feel is a deep emotional hurt. When we feel like we are failing, like it's not enough, like we're not helping our kids enough, it can feel like a moral failing as well as a professional one.

It's pretty clear that teachers as a group are struggling to cope with the ever-increasing pressures of the job.

In their 2020 study, Stapleton et al. (2020) found Australian teachers experienced depression, anxiety, and substance abuse at far higher rates than the general public, with work, workload, and finances identified as the most significant sources of stress. A staggering 62% of teachers met the criteria for moderate to severe anxiety, while 18% met criteria for moderate to severe depression, and 17% met criteria for substance abuse or dependence. This is simply not okay. It is not okay for people who are dedicating their working lives to the education of children to pay for it with their mental and physical health (the same study found a whopping 56% experienced somatic symptoms). But it's not just the seemingly exponential increases in our workload that is creating this dumpster fire of a situation we find ourselves in. Working your guts out can be okay (in moderation!) if you are feeling valued and recognised for your work. Therein lies the rub.

4 What's the Problem? The Influence of the Media

Open any newspaper over the last couple of decades (at least, probably way longer, but that's about as long as I've been reading newspapers!) and you'll be confronted with panicked articles about our "falling education standards", "failing schools", and, importantly, the need for "better quality teachers". You'll hear similar rhetoric from our politicians too, who launch reviews into initial teacher education to "improve teacher quality" and "lift Australian school standards" (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021), and lament how easy teachers apparently have it (Kenny, 2018; Sharma, 2018).

It is true that Australian students are underperforming in some standardised tests compared to their international peers, although, it should be noted that we recently ranked in the top 10 countries for Maths and Science (Thompson, 2020). It's funny how that doesn't rate as much of a media mention, isn't it? It is important to interrogate how this is being presented. Carol Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" framework for policy analysis (Bacchi, 2009) allows us to see that in any presentation of an issue, there is an implication of who or what is to blame for it. A good example she uses to explain this is the idea of getting more women in the workplace and into senior positions: if the solution presented is that women need to do more training and improve their negotiation skills in order to excel in the workplace, the problem is represented as being a fundamental lacking of skill on the part of the women. However, if the solution offered is that workplaces should increase flexible working arrangements and have quotas, the problem is shown to be innate bias in the workplace. Similarly, if the solutions presented to Australia's falling international educational ranking is to increase teacher quality, the problem is presented as teachers. And our lack of "quality".

This is the narrative of the "deadbeat" teacher; the teacher who lacks "quality". It's the direct attack. It says that the reason our students and schools are "failing" is because our teachers aren't up to scratch. In fact, we're so terrible we couldn't even get good marks at school ourselves! We're not the elusive "best and brightest". Cue the promise of bursaries to "encourage the best and brightest into teaching" (Hunter, 2019) and a review into "how to attract the best and brightest into teaching" (Hare, 2021), as if we're not already here! Using Bacchi's framework, we can easily see that politicians and policy proposing these sorts of solutions that attempt to improve the perceived "quality" of the people who choose a career in teaching represents the problem with schools as the apparent low calibre of those of us in the job now.

This is where we see politicians like Andrew Laming (Kenny, 2018) and Dave Sharma (2018) talking about teachers' working hours being too short and having too many holidays. These sorts of narratives permeate our culture and lead many in the general public to agree that teachers aren't up to par and really don't work very much. That's why your uncle at the family barbeque and the comments sections on social media talk about your "9–3" job and "12 weeks holiday every year". The "deadbeat teacher" narrative is the constant implication that we don't work very hard and aren't very good at the job we do anyway. There is, of course, an ulterior motive at play here. Politicians need education and schools to be "failing" so that they can campaign to "fix" it to win elections. They need it to be our fault so they can "fix" us too. And, look, at least the direct attack deadbeat teacher narrative is pretty obvious. Every time it does the rounds, teachers respond with ferocity as we reassure ourselves and our colleagues that this is rubbish. But it is exhausting.

5 Not Failing, Fighting

I need to pause here and be really clear about something: Teachers and schools and students are not failing.

We are not failing.

We are not failing just because some politician or policy-maker has arbitrarily plucked out some target data point and said we need to jump through hoops and check boxes to reach it or we fail.

The function of schools and teachers and students is not to perform on standardised tests and assessments. That is not our purpose. Our function is to nurture, and guide, and inspire, and excite, and enthuse. Our function is to uphold democracy by shaping young people who can create and question and explore. To create and compliment communities that value cooperation and contribution. And that's really what parents want too.

As a parent, I would much rather that my kids be resilient, kind, thoughtful, creative, and dynamic people, than get high test scores.

Because resilient, kind, thoughtful, dynamic persons can make their life happen if they really want it. If they really want to study that course or get to that career, they will. A data point on a page won't stop them.

6 Impacts that can't be Standardised

I think we all have stories of people we know who didn't "succeed" by traditional measures at school, but are busy living interesting, full, and "successful" lives.

I had a student who bombed out her Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations. She was managing complex family issues. Her Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) got her into exactly nothing, but she was determined to go to university so she did a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) course the year after she finished school, applied for the course she wanted again, and she started university the very next year studying international business studies. She now runs a team of people working in Singapore. It wasn't a great ATAR that got her there, it was all the other things she gained from her time at school. It was her actual education.

Another student of mine was in the lowest streamed Year 9 and 10 English class in my first couple of years of teaching. It was a pretty chaotic class. The kind where "high expectations" meant students staying in their seats, not becoming aggressive, and we would choose one swear word a week that we were working on not saying. That was the class she was in. And she held her own in there. She was the second youngest sibling of 12 children and she once shared with me a secret dream to be a PE teacher. No one in her family had ever finished school before. Let alone gone to university. And you know what? Neither did she. She became a teen mum.

She emailed me a few years after she finished school to direct me to a blog that she writes about motherhood and fitness. She told me that she started just loving writing when she was in my English class and so she'd decided to write a blog and she loved it. There is no data point to measure that, but there is no greater success for an English teacher than a student developing a love of writing.

We need to be vigilant that we don't buy into the outside world's desire to fit our value into a box. Our students are whole, complex human beings whose success cannot be measured with a single score on a test. And our value cannot be measured that way either.

We need to remember our true purpose and function. And we need to notice all the ways and places where we are succeeding in that. When we make students feel like they belong to a community, when we make them feel valued and safe, when we give them the confidence to know that they can learn new things, when we show them the value of mistakes and mis-steps and teach them about resilience. This is what we do.

7 The Trickle-Down Effect of the Failure Narrative

This narrative about failing teachers and failing schools isn't helping students either. They are clever enough to know that it is them who are "failing". And they are feeling the pressure. According to data from Mission Australia and The Black Dog Institute in 2017 as many as one in four kids aged 15–19 are experiencing a mental illness and, worse, this number had increased steadily over the preceding five years. This same report found managing stress, and school and study pressure to be the most concerning issues for the young people surveyed. And that's not to mention that suicide is still the leading cause of death for young people, and is also alarmingly increasing (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2021).

And is it really any wonder? The teachers who nurture them and their learning are routinely denigrated in the media and in politics, and are struggling with burnout, overwork, and mental health issues themselves. The parents who love and care for them are under increasing levels of mortgage stress (Digital Finance Analytics, 2021), working long hours (Passmore, 2017), managing drought, fire, flood, and a global pandemic. Can we really be surprised that young people's mental well-being is also suffering?

In their 2016 study, Oberle and Schonert-Reichl found that stress in the classroom is contagious. They compared the cortisol levels of elementary school students whose teacher either was or was not experiencing burnout, and found it was significantly higher for children whose teacher was experiencing burnout. So, a stressed-out teacher is having a serious health effect on our kids and making them stressed as well.

The deadbeat teacher narrative leads to its natural opposite: the martyr teacher narrative. The teacher who works late into the night, comes into school on weekends and holidays, is available to students, parents, and colleagues via email almost constantly, brings in food and school equipment for students without any.

These articles are usually written by teachers themselves to shine a light on the reality of our work when we are inevitably called "lazy" by some politician or commentator. This narrative means well—it is attempting to validate us, our students, our schools, and our contribution. But if the deadbeat teacher narrative is how outsiders bash teachers, the martyr narrative is how we bash ourselves.

We are so desperate not to be the deadbeat teacher. Because what would that say about us as a person? In a caring profession, to say you are lazy is to say you don't care enough; it is a moral and emotional judgement as much as a workplace one. When you tell a teacher they don't work hard enough, you are saying they don't care enough about their kids.

And so the martyr teacher narrative lands one of two ways: it either validates a teacher who already works way too hard and is in danger of burnout, or it makes teachers feel that their own contribution is sub-par because they don't work as hard as the teacher described. And so teachers build a culture of overwork—of "yes, it's too much, but we have to do it for the kids".

8 Exploited and Burnt Out Teachers

Teachers end up exploited. Working long hours in emotional, high stress jobs for relatively low pay, and suffering burnout, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

And we are terrible role models for our students when we overwork. Do we really want to teach our youth that it is okay to sacrifice your health and family for your job? Do we want them to feel guilty for spending time "doing nothing", watching the birds, feeling the breeze, playing video games, watching endless hours of Netflix, or staying up all night reading a book? Do we want them to take work home and do it on weekends and late nights? I'll tell you, that's not what I want for my kids.

And yet, it is the way our culture is going. Kids are routinely expected to do hours of homework from primary school, even though there is limited evidence that it actually enhances educational outcomes (Carbonell, 2013). I hear students in high school being told to study for three hours a night. Three hours! After a six-hour school day. That's more than a full-time job for a person who is in the throes of puberty, may have a casual job, and is struggling just to figure out who they are!

We know that young people are struggling with their mental health. We know that teachers are struggling with their mental health. Maybe this is why results are falling?

But, once again, who is presented as responsible for changing this damaging situation? We are. We are told all the things we need to do for our own well-being. We are told to make sure we eat well, exercise, keep a "gratitude journal", practice mindfulness, and myriad other things we should add to our to-do list. Students are given a similar "tool kit". But this makes a fundamental mistake: we need less things "to do" and more time to enjoy it.

As teachers, we develop our own "tool kit" for keeping the magic of our job alive while protecting our health and being a good role model for our students.

9 Clinging to the Core of Teachers' Work

We return to our core purpose. No one ever went into teaching to improve student test scores. We are teachers because we believe in the transformative power of education and the right to that education of every child. We are teachers because we love and respect children, and feel the thrill of supporting them and watching them in their journey from child to adult. We are teachers because we believe in the power of personal relationships and connection; we love the privilege of meeting and knowing so many young minds, of watching and facilitating as they grow and change, and of developing over and over again the bond of teacher and student. We are teachers because we love learning and knowledge and curiosity, and we know that is what kids love too. We show kids the world from our classroom and then help them to get wherever they want to go. That is our job. How lucky we are.

We protect our students, and we protect ourselves. Our students need us to be well and to go the distance with them. And so we must remember that careers are long. Everything needn't come at once. We are often told we "need to learn to say 'No!'", but no one ever mentions that the hardest person to say "No!" to is yourself. It is our enthusiasm we need to curb sometimes. We are so excited about a new idea or a project or an improvement, that we cannot say "No" to ourselves. But I have learned that we must. Because that way madness lies.

This means we need boundaries. Workplace boundaries are so very difficult for teachers to achieve. We have a deep emotional connection to our work and to the students and communities we serve. Boundaries can seem selfish, but all functional relationships have firm boundaries. That's why they work.

One thing I have found helpful to remember in a world so obsessed with "doing your best" is that, in fact, near enough is actually good enough most of the time. And giving 100% effort to 100% of things 100% of the time is 100% a recipe for disaster. I try to choose the things that matter; the things that meaningfully help my students, and give those my best. At least some of the time. Because, the best thing for our students is definitely not a stressed-out teacher (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). It's also not adults perpetuating this idea that they should be giving their all to everything all the time. We all need more permission to drop a ball sometimes because we can't juggle anymore—we just need to learn not to drop the glass ones.

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The Profession That Eats Itself: Addressing Teacher Infighting

Rebecca West

Abstract This chapter describes the way that the teaching profession is scored through with fault lines that are often invisible to external stakeholders, and even to many teachers themselves. These fault lines take the form of divisions within schools, within schooling systems, between the different systems in Australian education, and even in online spaces. Despite increasingly vocal calls for parents and policymakers to trust teachers (Sahlberg & Walker, 2021), for many within the profession, the first hurdle to overcome is trusting one another. This divisiveness even finds voice within online fora, where teachers become divided by platform, as well as by distinctions carried over from their school settings. This is a dangerous environment, and contributes to teacher demoralisation and inefficiency. It also stops teachers working together to improve their own working conditions. The chapter closes with some thoughts on how teachers may address these fault lines, to heal the profession and allow for schools to become sites of active democracy.

1 Teacher Infighting

In an industry where success is best achieved among an atmosphere of support, guidance and positivity, teachers can often be their own worst enemy. From early childhood education through to higher education, teachers can be highly judgemental of their own performance and achievements. This assessment is often not limited to a critique of their own practice and may extend to their colleagues, such as the teacher down the hall, the teacher in the next suburb and even the teacher in the next state. Although hailed as a profession of nurturers and carers, it appears that this pastoral side often extends only to the students in their care, and not to their colleagues. Of course, actions such as these are not limited to educational settings—yet the vital importance of education, and its constant appearance in media narratives, means that these criticisms cast uncertainty on the quality of educators in the Australian education system and the values held by those responsible for the development of

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future generations. Teacher infighting can affect society's perceptions of teachers and the education profession, and this results in people questioning the value of educators, and the education system itself.

The experiences, knowledge and perspectives presented in this chapter come from my 18-year teaching career in the New South Wales (NSW) public education system. These comments are my own and are not official statements from the NSW Department of Education (DoE), or any of my previous employers. While these examples are localised to my Australian and New South Wales centric experience, I feel these tensions exist in all systems around the world. The comments I make here about teacher infighting are relevant and present in many other jurisdictions. This chapter examines observable behaviours of teachers, and educational leaders, and embeds challenges for upholding the role of schools in Australian democracy, narrowed into 3 focus areas:

- Within schools and their systems
- Across schools and their systems
- Online

This chapter recognises the existence of actual, physical violence that occurs far too frequently in Australian schools. Such violence is completely unacceptable. The figures are startling: during 2019, Workcover accepted 291 assault and occupational violence claims from teachers. That's 1.5 claims for every one of 194 school days (Lynch, 2020). Principals appear to be particular targets: more than 40% of principals reported being a victim of physical violence in 2019 compared to, up from 27.3% in 2011 (Riley et al., 2020) and more than one-third of Queensland school principals were physically attacked by a parent or student in 2018 (Lynch, 2020). These are confronting statistics and I certainly don't intend to minimise the dangers posed by physical violence. However, this chapter will focus on other, often overlooked forms of violence, including intimidation, bullying and incivility. In particular, I am focusing on those acts perpetrated by teachers, leaders and Education support staff within, and against, the profession itself.

This is a pressing issue, as Sheehan et al. (2020) note. They surveyed Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) concerns among union members in education and found that 77.6% of members had experienced intimidation, among other patterns of incivility, aggression and violence. There is a corpus of research focused on Teacher-targeted bullying and harassment (Billett et al., 2019; Fogelgarn et al., 2019; Kõiv, 2015) which aims to explore where and why these patterns of bullying and harassment occur from the perspective of someone within the teaching profession. Everyone is entitled to a safe workplace and one could easily deem that a work environment with patterns of incivility is not a good work environment.

In particular, this chapter focuses on the origins of these behaviours. The release of the Gallop Inquiry (2021) provided evidence of the growing teaching and administrative responsibilities on teachers. The inquiry reported that these responsibilities have created a high level of intensity and complexity in the work that teachers are expected to do and yet, compared with other professions, salaries have declined. This creates more stress in an industry that already has a high level of stress considering the importance of the work that teachers do every single day. These increased complexities create a strained work environment and this in turn means that interactions between colleagues become more negative than intended.

2 Engaging Professionally Within Schools and Systems

Even when a teacher is dedicated to their role as one who inspires others, this commitment isn't always extended to the colleagues with whom they work. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs) have been set by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). These standards provide a framework to govern the teaching profession across Australia and include the standard 'Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community' which consists of expectations around ethics, responsibility, compliance, and the conduct expectations of systems and schools (AITSL, 2017). These standards are further clarified and explained through various systemic documents, policies and codes such as a 'Code of Conduct' (NSW Education, 2021). Despite this being in place, this stipulation of contractual obligations does not prevent adults from engaging in behaviour that was traditionally a focus more commonly associated with students: bullying. Media reports in recent years have shown the scope of workplace bullying that exists in Australian schools. Teachers and school leaders report examples such as repetitious corridor gossip, public belittling and power struggles between members of staff. This points towards the existence of a bullying culture that is difficult to combat (Martin, 2017). The level to which these behaviours can impact a person, or a school culture, depends on the complexity of the experience and how these behaviours are managed by school leadership and systems in place to combat this. This is not only a school-level concern but is also experienced in the corporate sector of educational systems such as the regional or state level (sometimes referred to as head office, much like other state-wide businesses would have a head office).

It's hard to imagine that corridor gossip is something that can exist in workplaces such as schools, especially when one considers how busy teachers are: they often state that their time is so limited that they barely have time for lunch and doing their job: teaching. Yet, it does happen and can meet the definition of workplace bullying. Gossip and bullying aren't limited to boundaries set by rank or faculty. Teachers might gossip about other teachers, their leaders or even administrative staff in the school and vice versa. In most school systems, there are similar staffing structures where the Principal is the head of the school and supported by an executive leadership team. In NSW public schools, this would be comprised of Deputy Principals, and Assistant Principals/Head Teachers. Schools with less than 500 students in the NSW public system aren't staffed with a Deputy Principal, which can create an additional workload to the Assistant Principals within that school and minimise the level of support available to teachers that would otherwise be available in larger schools. Each leader has a team of staff to supervise and monitor their development. For example, an Assistant Principal might supervise the team of teachers teaching Year

5 and Year 6. This Assistant Principal is usually also a teacher within that team, but has the additional responsibilities of monitoring teaching programmes and teacher performance.

These leadership positions are essentially managerial roles where power imbalances can impact the relationship between the teacher and their supervising leader. An example of this is when a personality clash impacts clear communication and implies something that was not intended. Even if a supervisor has the best intentions and positive interactions with their team member, the title that the supervisor carries has a level of importance that could create an unintended negative impression upon the teacher, depending on their previous experiences with a supervisor. This could impact communication or engagement between the parties in both a positive and negative way. It can lead to misunderstandings about bullying behaviour as a supervisor has the responsibility of making sure someone else is performing their job as expected. The supervisor is expected to have the training, knowledge and experience to be able to know the employee rights and responsibilities as well as the ability to guide their team as needed. The team may not have this same knowledge and if their work performance is scrutinised or critiqued, the team member might feel attacked or bullied. Is it bullying, or is the team member being asked to fulfil their responsibilities by someone who hasn't communicated this professionally?

These power imbalances and misinterpretations can lead to disengagement in relationships and possible descent into negativity, gossip and internal rifts. It could possibly be that the main source of teacher infighting is the inability or lack of willingness to perceive things from another person's perspective. Teachers would all benefit from training and development in emotional intelligence during their early years of teaching—or throughout their undergraduate studies. It's not uncommon to hear school leaders comment that the hardest part of the job is not working with children—instead, it's working with adults.

A difficult scenario for most is when they feel a colleague has undermined them—this could be by a peer or a faculty supervisor. Young or beginning teachers often experience this when a more experienced teacher steps in and takes over a lesson or when they give students different information to the class teacher. This can also happen with the roles reversed. There are experienced teachers who recount times when supervising a Pre-Service or beginning teacher who stepped in and told the experienced teacher that their pedagogies are outdated, old or not innovative. Regardless of which situation occurs, this demonstrates reluctance or refusal to see things from someone else's perspective and can cause disruption in the dialogue between teachers.

As stated earlier, teachers already have a significant workload. However, that is not the only factor that contributes to the large numbers of teachers leaving the profession. One must consider what the impact of repeated negative experiences with colleagues is, and how that contributes to the tension and ultimately the decision by many young teachers to leave. Furthermore, it is also worth questioning how that contributes to poor learning outcomes for students.

3 Engaging Professionally Across Schools and Systems

In addition to the conflict within school and their systems, there are additional arenas where conflict can occur: these are across educational jurisdictions. This often takes the form of specific groups of teachers and specific kinds of schools being ignored or offered only minimal representation within public narratives about education. For example, there is a shameful disregard for teachers and educational leaders working with children in juvenile incarceration, hospital schools and Schools for Specific Purposes (SSP, also known as 'Special Schools'). This is even stranger considering that teachers complete their training together, studying the same subjects, attending the same practical experiences and developing personal relationships over years of higher education, yet they are often absorbed by the narrative of the sector in which they're employed. Some of these divisions are presented below: they include public vs private, early childhood vs primary, city vs country, large vs small and so on.

3.1 Public vs Private

In the Australian Education system, schools are divided into Government (or public) and non-Government or Private (comprising systems like Catholic and Independent schools' systems) systems (Gillespie, 2014). There remains an ongoing and highly contentious debate about whether an education in a public school is preferential to one in a private school. This debate continues to resurface and remains fuelled by media reports and political decision-making. This debate is not prosecuted solely by parents or policy-makers; indeed, teachers themselves often have strong views about this, too. This is confusing, considering many of these teachers are trained alongside one another throughout university before becoming a contracted employee of their chosen sector—and indeed, for many teachers, it's less of a choice of sector and more about where they can find employment. There are those who advocate for the need to have a faith-based system while there are others that will simply maintain that their system is just 'better' (Gillespie, 2014). Public teachers maintain that they are the most inclusive, and therefore better, system as they do not follow the same selection protocols as private/independent schools. Opinions on this matter can get very heated especially when it comes to the matter of government funding and who deserves it the most. I have known public teachers who have had very negative experiences when engaging with teachers from the private/independent sector. A common refrain is that public school teachers felt that they were looked down on by their independent colleagues. As a public educator, I have never actually directly experienced this negative behaviour from colleagues in the private sector; instead, the imbalance has been more implied. When you hear about the extra resources available in private schools and the opportunities afforded their students and staff, it highlights a significant gap that exists. While no one has ever said to me 'we have things better than you', sometimes that thought lingers in the air.

3.2 Early Childhood vs Primary vs Secondary

There are also clashes between high school teachers and primary school teachers about who works hardest and who is the most valuable. This argument seems quite childish—but they are picked up by the media and repeated. For example, other teachers have described Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) as glorified babysitters (Shpancer et al., 2008). This notion could be exacerbated by the far lower rates of pay for ECEs, and therefore their perceived worth. How baffling to think that those caring for the earliest stages of learning and development are so easily cast aside, especially when everything shows the massive benefits of their impact on students learning outcomes!

Pasi Sahlberg, currently the professor of Education Policy at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, has sought to start a conversation about improving educational practices by sharing successful models of teaching and learning practices from Finland and worldwide. His discussion (Sahlberg & Doyle, 2020) on the importance of play and play-based learning has highlighted the value of early years learning practices that has previously been disregarded by many in the primary or secondary education sector. From this, a slow, yet growing, shift in the attitudes of primary teachers towards early childhood educators has emerged as they have adapted their classroom practices to include play-based learning strategies and appreciate the level of planning, preparation and curriculum that is involved in these practices: it is not simply a case of putting out random toys for kids to play with. It involves strategic planning and many observations of student needs that are linked to curriculum in ways that are meaningful for students to learn. Perhaps, in this case, there is hope that this infighting might soon become a thing of the past.

Another example of this division is the disconnected and almost patronising attitude felt by primary teachers from secondary teachers. Primary teachers report that the secondary teachers insinuate that all primary teachers do is worksheets and colouring. Another criticism is that primary teachers aren't curriculum experts because they don't have a degree in that field and it's not a dedicated focus area of teaching—instead, they are 'generalists'. Of course, primary teachers are equally able to criticise secondary school teachers, too. Primary teachers will comment that they are more caring than high school teachers, that they know their students better and that they have better relationships with family and community because primary school is the first entry point to school. There are some who will tell high school teachers that they cannot make a difference in their students' learning when they only see them a few periods a week. All these opinions do is highlight the inexperience teachers have in what it is like to work across various educational settings and contexts. Little consideration is given to what it is like to walk in the other person's shoes—or to teach in another's classroom!

3.3 City vs Country (or Otherwise Known as Metropolitan vs Rural and Remote)

It has been suggested that rural education is too often viewed from an outsider's lens rather than through a rural agenda (Wallace & Boylan, 2007). It does not matter if a teacher is in the public or private sector. When a person makes the change from the city to the country, the differences in education are prominent. From a general viewpoint, country settings have less technology; the city has more excursions. Fewer relief teachers are available in the country which means country teachers are less able to attend professional learning. In some cases, there are more teachers in the city volunteering for additional roles, merely as a means to fill out their CV and gain permanency. Only those who have worked in both types of regions will truly understand that both have their advantages and disadvantages. Our current means for gauging the impact of education in the country are skewed as everything is dependent on context, and therefore unable to be measured accurately (Education Matters, 2017). For example, in the country, there are fewer opportunities for excursions and professional learning, but this is often replaced by the benefits of community events, knowing your students and their families well, and creating long-lasting supportive networks that will support you and your school for decades as you teach multiple generations from one community. In the city, you have access to more resources and experiences but are also working in extremely overpopulated schools and could go an entire year without meeting some of your students' parents. Another prominent issue for rural schools is high level of students being taught by teachers that are working outside their field of expertise. If you are in a rural setting, you're more likely to be taught by someone who doesn't have a degree in what they're teaching (Wallace & Boylan, 2007), and this does raise concerns about the educational experience of students. Unfortunately, rather than a recognition of the advantages of either setting, and a mature discussion about how to make the most of the opportunities available, this divide has proven to be another point of contention between teachers who often argue about where it's best to teach. This is definitely an area of conversation where teachers absolutely need to unite and support one another.

3.4 Large Schools vs Small Schools

As stated earlier, sometimes the voices of specific groups of teachers are left out of debates about education. The division between teachers in small and large schools is a good example of this. According to the NSW Education staffing entitlements (2018), a small school is one with 112 students or less enrolled, or in the case of a K-2 school, it is 77 or less students enrolled. A common misperception is that small schools only exist in rural and remote areas. Small schools can be found in metropolitan areas as well and are expected to be able to perform similarly to large schools just because they have access to the same resources and services as a large school. Of course, this ignores the specific challenges that are present within small schools. Small schools encounter many barriers, regardless of whether they are a remote or metropolitan school, and this can lead to the misperception that they underperform because of those barriers. Another misperception is that there is less variety in small schools due to the smaller staffing and limited resources. A small school can have just as much diversity and access to innovative resources as a large school. These misperceptions are felt among teachers of a smaller setting when they are not included in combined school activities such as sports days, professional learning or in externally coordinated programmes that are designed for larger groups. Professional learning or resources that are used as examples of what can be done in schools rarely uses small schools as an example, leaving small schools to essentially fend for themselves. The NSW Teachers Federation even has a Small Schools Committee to provide additional support to these schools, knowing the complex nature in which these schools operate (NSW TF, 2020, 2021).

3.5 *Mainstream vs Schools for Specific Purposes (SSP)*

It has been extremely disappointing in recent years to see how many teachers are unaware of what SSP schools are and the great support they provide for students with moderate to high needs. Many don’t know what the acronym means, and even when you explain what the acronym stands for, they still ask ‘What’s that?’ and I have to resort to saying ‘a special school’ so they can connect the dots. The students that attend an SSP can be experiencing a wide variety of complexities that include behavioural, cognitive and social/emotional needs. In NSW schools, students are enrolled based on detailed applications that are compiled through a rigorous process of reports which can come from paediatricians, school counsellors and psychologists, speech pathologist, occupational therapist and the school learning support team.

There is an ongoing conversation about inclusive education practices for students and that has caused somewhat of a rift between mainstream teachers and SSP teachers as the opinions differ across a great spectrum. The fact that many do not even know what these specialised teachers do on a daily basis and yet hold an opinion that SSP schools shouldn’t exist is a blatant disregard for the difficult nature of their context and the hard work that goes into supporting their students. Many SSP teachers have worked across both mainstream and specialised settings and have the experience to compare the different educational settings, whereas most mainstream teachers have never set foot in a specialised setting, such as an SSP school. SSP teachers often feel left out of professional learning as it targets mainstream teachers. In my own conversations with SSP teachers, they have shared experiences of being called babysitters, of ‘having it easy’ because they have fewer students, being told that they don’t actually teach curriculum, and even told they couldn’t handle being in the mainstream setting because you have to ‘programme and teach properly’. It’s baffling (and disgusting) to know these comments have come from fellow teachers, and also quite obvious that people making these comments have never truly seen the dedication, hard work and curriculum-focused programmes provided by SSP teachers.

3.6 Mathematics vs English vs All Other Learning Areas

Another area that leads to teacher infighting is the question of relative importance of the different key learning areas (KLAs). This often is limited to debates about which is the most important—English or Mathematics—but at times, it can be an argument about whether too much focus is placed on Mathematics and English, to the detriment of other KLAs. The subject debate is much stronger in secondary school than primary school—but it can happen in primary schools, nonetheless. There is ongoing dialogue about the importance of developing literacy skills and how those skills impact learning in all other areas, such as understanding worded problems in mathematics. This has become such a large focus that it seems to be overshadowing the importance of all other Key Learning Areas. We acknowledge English and Mathematics so distinctly but then a whole group of specialised educators seem to get lumped under one banner of ‘other subjects’. Art, physical education, music, industrial arts, drama and more take a back seat in the conversation when we talk about how our students compare to the rest of the world. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a global assessment that measures students, at 15 years of age, on their ability to solve real-world problems using their mathematics, reading and science skills (Thomson et al., 2019). The ongoing results show a consistent decline in the results of Australian students since the year 2000. This drives further discourse into the need for better English, Mathematics and Science programmes and away from all other learning areas. Saubern (2010) shares the notion that students would perform better if allowed to engage in more creative subjects. Saubern (2010) shares the experiences of how creative programmes, such as visual arts, music and dance, can support students in achieving and even creating pathways for future education. These programmes were deemed to be more sustained and supported by the community which in turn improved rates of student attendance and the level of engagement in the classroom.

3.7 Pedagogy

As contemporary learning has become future-focused, it has highlighted a particular group of teachers that prevent a shift within learning systems. These are those that are unwilling to change their practice as education changes. Teachers who consistently make the case that things can remain the way they have always been, because it has worked fine for them so far. This type of debate can be challenging and isn’t necessarily a generational factor. There are many very experienced teachers who integrate technology, utilise flexible learning and embrace future-focused pedagogies. It's the nature of those who cannot demonstrate lifelong learning practices who will create a stagnant conversation that reverts to cyclic arguments and can sometimes lead to performance concerns under the code of conduct. There are some teachers who support their own pedagogical practices while publicly denigrating differing approaches, for example the debate between inquiry learning vs direct/explicit instruction. This is polarising and becomes an ultimately pointless debate as it is a matter of personal preference based on experiences and own school context. The fact that we have codes of conduct for teachers is evidence that behaviour among teachers is not always positive or professional.

4 Online Teacher Infighting

There are many different online mediums and networks available for teachers to explore and to learn from one another. Yet, they can become a dangerous platform for teachers too, and in many ways can exacerbate and increase the scale of any teacher infighting. Social media is a place where one can take thoughts that would never be said in person, and instead they can be recorded in a comment thread, for all to see, and forever remain online. These comments in public forums can come from parents and current or even ex-students. These kinds of comments are often easier for teachers to ignore, or to rationalise based on the ignorance of the commenter. But when these types of comments are made in private forums, by colleagues, it presents a much more difficult challenge to teachers. Online mediums become a place where cyber bullying is rife, along with plagiarism, and a high level of unwarranted and unjustified scrutiny. Maine (2017) reports on research that estimates a ratio where for every one negative encounter, a person needs five positive encounters to be able to counter balance the negative effects. It's very difficult to get this kind of balance in the online sphere, especially when many negative contributions are done under anonymity. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are all examples of this.

4.1 Twitter

I joined Twitter in 2016 as my peers recommended it as a place for professional accounts, collaboration and a way to stay connected to the most current research and practice. For the most part, I control my own algorithm by focusing on interactions that are dedicated to professional development, positive dialogue, educational discussions and supporting teachers. However, this has not gone without observing the complete opposite occur where educators and educational leaders have been publicly mocked, shamed, name-called and accused of causing offence, sometimes by teachers. Those who hold political positions linked to education have also been on the receiving end of these negative interactions by people who have profiles that specifically identify them as teachers, educators or educational leaders. Teachers spend so much time battling the effects of cyber bullying on our students, yet there seem to be many engaging in these behaviours against their peers, politicians and employers.

4.2 Facebook

Many teachers use personal accounts to join groups on Facebook that are dedicated to educational conversation and sharing resources in an open and free platform. There are some teachers who create a more business-style account in order to share resources openly and then there are actual education-related business that promote and sell professional learning, teaching programmes or resources. Within the group platforms, teachers will often ask questions or instigate conversations to gauge what other teachers are doing. Ideally, this is a great way for teachers to build their capacity and develop consistent teacher judgement. Unfortunately, some take the judgement part too seriously and use this as an opportunity to tell people that they are doing things wrong or casting judgement on the performance of the teacher posting to the group. I have seen teachers commenting about the spelling or grammar of a person posting to a group. It often reminds me of an article titled 'People Who Constantly Point Out Grammar Mistakes Are Pretty Much Jerks' (Macdonald, 2017) which discusses a study completed in the University of Michigan where 'there were definitely certain personality types that judged the typo-riddled applicants more harshly'. Thankfully, there are still quite extroverted contributors to these online conversations who focus on the positive opportunities to engage and develop their own skill sets (or the skill sets of their peers). Bergviken Rensfeldt et al. (2018) discuss their study on the use of online groups of teachers on social media, such as Facebook. They found that while there are positive short-term benefits to professional discourse on Facebook, there are long-term effects for 'diminished professionalism and expertise of teachers' (p. 248). I can only imagine that a person would continue to engage in that forum, provided they were receiving the 5:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions. If not, will they continue to participate for the benefit of their own learning, or the learning of others, or will they just withdraw from the experience completely.

4.3 Instagram

Of all the online forums teachers can engage in, I believe most would agree that Instagram is the world of picture-perfect classrooms. It's a compilation of colourful walls, cute lanyards and promotions for some kind of exclusive teacher package. Carpenter et al. (2020) discuss why educators use Instagram and that the platform itself uses visual methods, which deliver content that primarily focuses on the cosmetic aspects of teaching and not as grounded in professional learning of education. There are teachers who use Instagram to promote their Teachers Pay Teachers store where they sell teaching resources. Instagram is a more positive space in comparison to others where comments are very positive and supportive. The negative aspect of this platform comes more intrinsically where teachers feel they can't live up to the high expectations of creating a perfect classroom. A classroom that is always tidy, painted with creative murals, full of the latest Kmart supplies or even the perfectly lined up storeroom with labelled containers. There are teachers on Instagram who show their teacher outfits every day. Often with the latest styles and accessories, sometimes in partnership with a boutique. If you're a teacher like me scrambling each morning to get kids teeth cleaned and run a brush through your hair, then you don't have the time (or the money) for this dedication to appearance. For me though, I don't care that other people are doing this. For some people, this can make them feel like they're not quite doing enough or that they just don't have their life together. It's never explicitly said and not even implied. But it does give off some seemingly unnatural persona of a teacher that isn't really accurate when we know how messy and chaotic the daily life of a teacher can be.

5 Final Thoughts

Even when we try to empower teachers or recognise the great things they do, there is always some kind of negative response or backlash. From my personal experience, I can reflect on the recognition I received early in 2021 as a recipient of one of 12 Commonwealth Bank Teaching Awards. A prestigious honour in which I became a 2021 Teaching Fellow. For the most part, I received absolutely lovely feedback and congratulations from my employers, peers, friends and of course family. Yet, now and then, there would be whispers that would surface. Things like 'Why should she get all the attention?', 'There's other teachers who deserve it too'. Even though these comments were very few, they stick with you. And it's hard to let the negativity sink below all the positive sometimes. This is exactly how teachers feel when negative things occur. The infighting does not serve us in any way, shape or form.

Regardless of the abundance of research and training regarding bullying in schools by students, there is still much to be learned about workplace bullying between colleagues in schools (Duncan, 2005). In order to be part of the solution, we must shine a magnifying glass on what is causing this appalling display of teacher bashing that exists within our industry.

When we dissect the notion that this all stems from personal behaviours, it really points to the need for teachers to develop their understanding of one another and gain some insights into each other's contexts and complexities. There is much to be learnt by simply visiting another school and sharing our battles and successes together. Our conversations should be guided by a better sense of self and awareness of others. This all indicates a need for teachers to have very good skill sets that come from emotional intelligence and empathy for our colleagues.

As Jesse Jackson said: ‘Never look down on anybody unless you’re helping him up’.

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The Demise of Teacher Expertise and Agency by the "Evidence-Based Discourse"

George Lilley

Abstract By combining the personal reflections of an experienced teacher within the Victorian public education system, with extensive research into the dominant educational voices across this time, this chapter is able to explore, in a personal and longitudinal manner, the way that teachers' expertise and agency have been diminished. One of the dominant ideologies explored is the work of John Hattie's research that has shaped much of the recent discourse around education, being representative of the ideological push for "evidence-based practices". These practices reduce teachers to instrumental actors, and leaves little room for teacher expertise to be considered on equal footing. The dissemination of these ideas begin at the research level, before being enacted as policy, where they are introduced wholeheartedly, and often uncritically, by leadership groups in systems and schools across various jurisdictions. These levels and layers of abstraction can leave many teachers feeling powerless and without recourse, as they are so occluded from many teachers' direct line of sight. This chapter will examine the process and some of the dominant ideas, and provide ways for teachers to note these forces, and challenge them within existing and emerging structures.

1 20 Years of the Same Trend

Over the last 20 years, working as a teacher in the Victorian Education System, I've noticed a significant increase in the belittling of teachers. This has come from politicians, as one might expect, but also form an unexpected source: that of academia. John Hattie's work is an insightful case study of how this occurs. In this chapter, I will examine his claims and how they support the broader agenda of accountability within education that continues to be present. In addition, the promotion of "evidence-based education" (EBE) and the resultant decrease in teacher autonomy, which has stifled democracy in schools and disempowered teachers, is examined. In the last 15 years there has been a significant shift towards EBE, but it is important to note that only

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particular meanings for the term “evidence” are promoted (Simpson, 2019a, 2019b). This is the narrow “evidence” such as that presented by John Hattie and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and that generated via their preferred methodology, the meta-meta-analysis. This article will also raise some doubts about this method. Finally, there will also be a discussion of policy entrepreneurs, those academics who push an agenda appealing to those in power and happily cloak it in the shoddy look-a-like robes of the academy, often despite that very academy criticizing that position.

2 Why Focus on Hattie?

Both the New South Wales (NSW) and Victorian (Vic) educational systems have used Hattie’s claims to direct their pedagogical approaches. This is not surprising. Hattie’s work has been influential in Denmark (Knudsen, 2017), Norway (Imsen, 2011) and initially gained a foothold in New Zealand before being openly challenged by their Union (O’Neill et al., 2016). Hattie’s work has been so influential because it suits educational administrators and policymakers. Yet, Hattie’s claims are rarely questioned or analysed within those systems and further, systems of accountability have been set up to ensure compliance (Wescott, 2022). There is a large body of academic critique of Hattie’s work that is not being considered by school leaders and not being promoted to teachers and parents. My hope is reflected in my colleague Pauline’s words, who noted: “our kids deserve better than this”.

From an international perspective, there are also good reasons to focus on Hattie, e.g. Professor Gunn Imsen who writes

> The Hattie fever is held by equally keen politicians, municipal bureaucrats and leaders who strive to achieve quantitative results in their target management systems, which are part of a paper mill that is stifling school in Norway. The best medicine against the fever is that Norwegian teachers take back the faith in themselves, their own judgment and trust in their own skills in the work of good teaching for the students. And that the school authorities support them in this. (Imsen, 2011)

I will suggest ways that this faith and trust can be rebuilt, with examples from Australia.

3 How Has the “Evidence” Base Usurped Teacher Expertise and Agency in Australia?

While one might argue that Hattie is only one individual, and the Educational Endowment Fund (EEF) has limited influence over Australia, this suggestion belies the powerful influence they have over Australian educational policy. John Hattie is the current Chair of the powerful Australian Institute for Teaching and School

Leadership (AITSL)[1] and is also the author of the highly influential book Visible Learning (VL).[2] The EEF[3] is an independent charity with a £125 m founding grant from the Department for Education in England; it also has an Australian link, The Evidence for Learning (E4L)[4] organisation. Also, recently, Sir Kevan Collins, former Founding CEO of England's EEF, was appointed to the board of the newly formed Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO).[5] AERO is funded through an initial investment of $50 million over three years by the Australian Commonwealth and the combined states and territories. Collins' appointment is concerning as it is another indication that this narrow band of evidence, from the meta-meta-analysis methodology, will continue to dominate Australian education. Collins has been outspoken about the value of teacher expertise. His criticism will be discussed below.

Visible Learning has significantly influenced Education Policy in Australia. For example, both the Victorian and New South Wales (NSW) Education Departments have mandated classroom practices based on the findings presented in Hattie's book. Victoria has defined the "10 High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS)"[6] and NSW the 8 "What Works Best"[7] publications. The 10 HITS are: Goal Setting; Feedback; Worked Examples; Multiple Exposures; Explicit Teaching; Questioning; Meta-Cognitive Strategies; Structuring Lessons; Collaborative Learning; and Differentiated Teaching. The 8 "What Works Best" are: High expectations; Explicit teaching; Effective feedback; Use of data to inform practice; Assessment; Classroom Management; Well-being; and Collaboration.

At a policy level, the HITS are a key component of the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model (VTLM) [8] and there are accountability systems via classroom observations, annual student, parent and staff surveys and teacher performance reviews which mandate school leaders and teachers to take School wide approaches using the HITS. In Victoria, most schools have a middle and upper leadership groups consisting of: Curriculum Leader, Learning Specialist, Assistant Principal and Principal who are heavily trained in the HITS. In the many professional development sessions I have attended, I've never heard one of these school leaders question or critique the evidence that the HITS are based on, nor engage with the research that does so. One of the goals of Australian schooling is to develop analytic and critical skills in students—yet this attribute appears lacking among school leaders!

The reason for this anomaly is that at a teacher and school level in Victoria, power has become more hierarchical and the VTLM has been imposed from above. Consequently, leaders who openly critique and question this are putting their future promotion opportunities at risk. I've heard many leaders question the VTLM in private and also when they leave the system (Westcott, 2022). This suggests that groupthink continues to be a major problem in the education system.

4 Instructional Models Guiding Teaching Practice

There has also been a move towards each school using a specific instructional model, leading to codified lesson plans. There are a number of instructional models (e.g. GANAG[9] from Marzano et al., 2001). Buckley Park College, a school within Metropolitan Melbourne is typical in the guidance it provides to teachers:

> Use of our instructional framework to guide classroom practice is a non-negotiable commitment of teaching at our school…The Instructional Framework is our explicit, common model of instruction...The model is based on well researched high yield instructional strategies described in "Classroom Instruction That Works" (Marzano et al.,2001) and "Visible Learning" (John Hattie).[10]

This local example shows the level of commitment to these ideas, where it is enshrined in policy as a means to ensure some level of teacher compliance. Although, personal feedback from teachers indicates that the compliance is largely tokenistic and not helpful in improving their teaching. In other words, it is performative.

At a school level, my experience has seen a shift from promoting good teachers and teaching within the school to promoting these HITS. This is probably because school leaders are time poor, and it is easier to use the HITS "off the shelf". For example, at my school, at the end of the year, teachers used to be given time to run sample lessons to other staff. Being a Mathematics teacher, I found this extremely helpful. For a start, I was able to see the practice of great teachers in my school of whom I was not aware. Also, I saw details of how teachers in different areas designed their lessons. This fostered collaboration and a celebration of good teaching, which in turn created a positive climate in the school.

However, since the HITS were implemented in 2017, these sessions were cancelled and instead, there is now a focus on staff using one instructional model and specific types of lesson plans. Instead of creative and professional examples and dialogue, staff instead make short presentations about how they have used the HITS in their yearly work. The standardisation of an instructional model and a lesson plan removes the diversity of teaching that I saw in those staff presentations pre-2017. This has not improved collaboration nor celebrated good teaching and mine and others' morale has declined. I think the important question here is whether or not it has improved teaching and learning? Is there any evidence of this?

The HITS dominate the area of research for schools in Victoria and New South Wales and have subtly taken the focus away from emerging research. An example is the evidence now being promoted for Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), which is largely invisible to most teachers in the Victorian system. While the New South Wales Education Department is now promoting CLT, a reasonable question is why CLT is not listed as one of their "What Works Best" strategies? Also, the Victorian Education Department currently makes no mention of CLT despite it being among the premiere research-informed findings to date.

5 Victoria's Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy Support (MYLNS) Initiative

Related to this is the Victorian Education Department's largest project so far. This is the Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy Support (MYLNS) initiative. This initiative is the largest fiscal investment in the upskilling of teachers to support those students "below minimum standard" on the nations National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy, in both Literacy and Numeracy. Initially, eight Professional development days were provided for hundreds of teachers. I was the numeracy representative from my school and was disappointed that the focus in the 3 introductory days was on Hattie's evidence, the Australian arm of EEF, E4L and a range of the HITS. I felt that this evidence was far too general and overlooked the complexity of different faculties, pedagogies and approaches. There was no mention of CLT in the groups I was involved in to improve numeracy. Also, the overwhelming feedback from teachers was that more specific and detailed strategies to improve numeracy in students was needed.

One of the most relevant problems I've had in mathematics classes related to MYLNS, is that often students don't ask questions to clarify a concept just taught. In the 8 MYLNS professional days that I attended, this was never addressed. The most useful research that I found on this was not with MYLNS nor the Department's website, but via a podcast by Lovell with Aaron Peters, who was completing his PhD on "Why Students don't ask for Help when they need it" (Lovell, 2019).

Another concern is that, despite significant peer review critique, VL has been promoted by politicians and Education Departments as the authoritative work on pedagogy. An example of the issues that many academics have with this are

> Under the surveillance of Visible Learning, teachers are not experts unless they subscribe to Visible Learning; they are no longer autonomous, but must comply rather than form their own judgements, and implementation is more important than concern. (McKnight & Whitburn, 2018, p. 13)

Gert Biesta was prophetic in warning of the demise of teacher agency and professional judgement, as a result of the "evidence-based" agenda promoting particular forms of evidence to play a governing role in teacher practice. Biesta goes as far as saying, this is a form of "totalitarianism" (2010, pp. 491–492). Biesta later argued that particular forms of evidence lead to a policing which narrows the professional development spaces for teachers (2015, p. 82). In my experience, this is exactly what has happened in my State and likely other systems where these ideas take hold.

6 Why Does Hattie's Evidence Dominate in Australia Rather Than Evidence from Other Reputable Organisations?

This is a strange state of affairs. Despite its limited presentation of evidence, and concerns about the value of its methodology, there is little doubt that Hattie continues to dominate educational discourse. Scott Eacott ascribes this as the "cult of the guru". This gives an accurate reason for Hattie's dominance: "Hattie's work has provided school leaders with data that appeal to their administrative pursuits" (Eacott, 2017, p. 3). This is a position shared by other researchers, too:

> In speaking to teachers, we have found that many have concerns that are similar to ours, but that they are silenced by senior staff in their schools, who have hitched their own branding to particular bandwagons. (McKnight & Whitburn, 2018, p. 20)

I think that Hattie's claim that reducing class size is a "disaster" (Hattie, 2005) is what originally made him popular among school administrators. I've worked for a number of years as a timetabler for schools and, for me, Eacott's reasoning rings true. Hattie's work was often quoted to me by leaders to justify large class sizes, despite teacher's experience that smaller class sizes improve their ability to teach.

Another concern about the deprofessionalisation of teachers relates to teachers' professional development, and their ability to select learning that suits their needs. Even here, Hattie is a dominant influence. Rather than a democratic process, PD and meetings in schools are normally run by a small group of leaders, who have already decided agendas and curriculum, usually based on the VTLM[8], before meeting with staff. In my experience, there is little consultation or democratic process, confirming McKnight and Whitburn's concerns. The same is true beyond the school level: I have been to state-wide PD, run by Assistant Principals who promote Hattie ad nauseam, while referring to VL as "the bible". This means that teachers are limited in their exposure to other teaching and learning ideas, which ultimately makes the focus on Hattie to be self-reinforcing.

7 Concerns About Hattie and the Meta-Meta-Analysis Methodology

It is important to remember that there is much concern regarding the validity of the findings presented in VL (Westcott, 2022). Hattie relies heavily on a meta-meta-analysis, as does the EEF. However, many researchers are sceptical of the value of this analysis, or the purpose to which it has been put, most recently in a Special Edition of Educational Research & Evaluation. I was concerned that there did not seem to be an easy way for teachers and parents to access the critical peer review of Hattie. So, I decided to find and summarise as much of the peer review as possible, and put it in a place easily accessed by teachers and parents. I have collected over 50 peer-reviewed articles, detailing a litany of misrepresentations, calculation errors and methodologic flaws in VL[11]. Teachers, academics and school leaders should access this resource when they find the ideas of John Hattie, or those of the EEF emerging in their settings in order to be conversant, at the very least, with the criticisms of Hattie's research.

8 Standardisation and Accountability

I started teaching in the Victorian Education System in 1980; at that time, there was flexibility for me to design the curriculum for the students I taught. I was a Mathematics and Physical Education teacher and by the late 1980s, Year 12 Physical Education (PE) was introduced into the Victorian System. Under general guidelines, I had to develop the Year 12 PE course myself. This flexibility changed in the 1990s when a more specific curriculum was defined by the State's Educational Authorities. Teachers were offered input, but my colleagues and I always believed this was tokenistic. Later, a clear example was the introduction of Graphics Calculators into Year 11 and 12 maths. My experience was that this was mostly against teachers' wishes. In 2009, all Australia states have since then agreed to a standardised national curriculum[12].

This speaks to another major theme within the realm of Eacott's "administrative pursuits" (2017) which is the promotion of standardisation and accountability. This takes numerous forms, including curricular ones. The implementation of the HITS and the 8 "What Works Best" is also a huge step towards a nationally standardised pedagogy, once again, decreasing the input from teachers and reducing their agency.

The key accountability tools are the two standardised testing regimes of The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and The National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). These also dominate policy direction as identified by the former Australian Federal Minister of Education, Alan Tudge who noted, "We must protect NAPLAN, and not give in to those who call for less accountability and less information for teachers and parents" (Tudge, 2021).

Alan Reid (2019) details that many of the items in the NAPLAN and PISA tests are not valid, and questions the use of invalid tests for accountability. He also details the rise of the neoliberal agenda in Australia and how these tests promote that agenda, in particular, the reduction of democratic values leading to a demise of teacher and student agency. Ladwig (2019) concurs, saying that accountability is centrally developed and deployed via the least expensive forms, like NAPLAN and that the national curriculum and the standardised testing of PISA and NAPLAN which work against teachers' professional judgement further disempowering them. Daliri-Ngametua & Hardy (2022) give detailed examples of the myopic focus on NAPLAN enforced on Queensland teachers. They describe teachers as "demoralized", "devalued", "conscientious objectors", and "doing without believing", resulting in a "personal and professional dissonance" which comes at a very real and practical cost.

The power of teachers to have input into their profession has been reduced significantly. As described above, teachers have moved from creators of curriculum to possible consultors about that curriculum. This motivated an initiative from the Australian Education Union (AEU) Victorian branch, who brought together a number of teachers to create a detailed policy initiative. In their preamble, they state: “Reclaiming the central role of teachers in schooling demands that teachers are at the centre of curriculum development”. This must be a key focus of all AEU members in enacting this policy.

Continuing the trend, I’ve noted within my own teaching career they continue:

> Government policies over time (particularly those informed by the managerialist notions of teachers as “rowers not steerers”) have diminished this role, marginalising the proper role and active involvement of teachers in the range of curriculum processes and undermining their professional autonomy. (AEU, 2019, p. 1)

This policy echoes my suggested actions below that teachers and school leaders must have the key role in the development, implementation and review of the curriculum.

9 The Explicit Diminishing of Teachers’ Knowledge and Evidence: John Hattie

As stated above, there are legitimate concerns about Hattie’s methodology which he uses as the basis for his research. There are also concerns about the way his strategies have been implemented in schools and systems in NSW and Victoria. However, perhaps the most concerning aspect is how Hattie, and those of like mind, are so critical of the teaching profession. Hattie is dismissive about teachers’ expertise in the classroom. For more than 10 years, a commonly cited comment of his has been used to limit the validity of teachers’ experiences: “Statements without evidence are just opinions” (Hattie, in Evans, 2012, p. 1). This statement has a number of problems. Firstly, this belittles teacher expertise and experience, and attempts to raise his so-called evidence and rankings above them. Hattie makes it clear that it was only his narrow band of evidence that was trustworthy; notably, this band excluded teacher expertise and experience. He even goes further, explicitly stating his desire to silence teachers: “Almost every teacher wants to get up and talk about their story, their anecdotes and their classrooms. We will not allow that, because as soon as you allow that, you legitimise every teacher in the room” (Hattie, in Knudsen, 2017, p. 3).

Hattie, like other policy entrepreneurs, is not alone in his desire to belittle teachers. Rose and Eriksson-Lee quote an even more provocative slogan from Kevan Collins (mentioned above), former Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF): “if you’re not using evidence to inform your decisions, you must be using prejudice” (Rose & Eriksson-Lee, 2017, p. 3). Hattie’s doubts about the expertise of teachers are clear in statements like this: “When teachers claim that they are having a positive effect on achievement or when a policy improves achievement, this is almost always a trivial claim: Virtually everything works. One only needs a pulse and we can improve achievement" (Hattie, 2009, p. 16). This was perhaps the most derogatory statement about teachers that I've ever heard; in some ways, it is absurd that somebody so scathing of teachers can be in any position of authority, yet the rise in popularity of Hattie, particularly with politicians and school leaders, has meant these ideas have spread unchallenged.

10 Ways to Challenge These Ideas

Much like Hattie's other claims, the idea that "Virtually everything works" is easily challenged—and that even applies to some of Hattie's own favoured techniques! For example, Wiliam (2014) and Nielsen and Klitmøller (2017) highlight Hattie's own reports demonstrate that 38% of studies show feedback Does NOT work! Teachers need to dispute Hattie's claim, "One only needs a pulse" by investigating whether "Virtually everything works", and speaking back to academics like Hattie and empowering one another to do the same.

Another way to challenge these ideas is to look at the detail of the meta-analysis Hattie cites. As shown with the example of feedback above, a significant number of studies report negative effect sizes for most of the influences Hattie details. In other words, a lot of interventions do not work—or at least do not work all the time, or in all contexts! My own example was using Hattie's highest impact strategy from VL, "self-report grades". Hattie claimed that students merely predicting their grade somehow magically accelerated their learning by 3 years! (Hattie, 2009). The result with my Year 12 students was that this did not work. In fact, I found the opposite effect among overconfident students, who predicted a grade of A but barely passed with a D.

Another way to challenge these ideas is to contrast the work of other reputable evidence organisations. For example, the largest educational evidence organisation is the USA's What Works Clearing House (WWC), who report the opposite of Hattie, that there is not good evidence for most educational interventions. The significance of this led Daniel Willingham (2018) to joke, that they should change their name to "The What Does NOT Work Clearing House". So if we were to use the WWC evidence base instead of Hattie's, we could easily argue that educational evidence of this type is currently contradictory and poor. But if we challenged and put aside Hattie's findings, what would be left behind to replace them? The answer is simple, yet revolutionary: we would need to rely on teacher judgement, experience, expertise and agency!

The rise of these challenges to some of his claims has recently caused Hattie to retreat, noting, "Most things that a teacher could do in a classroom 'sorta' work…" (Hattie & Hamilton, 2020, p. 3). I don't think "sorta" is part of the EBE jargon and contrary to Hattie's claim in VL that the evidence is clear and that it is possible to find "what works best". This suggests, strongly, that through teacher, grassroots as well as academic pressure, those pushing these ideas beyond and besides teachers can have an impact, more ideas of how individuals can support these ideas will be pursued later.

11 It's More Complicated Than That!

Teachers need to be always sceptical of simplistic claims that this or that strategy is proven by evidence, largely because there are many variables in Schooling. The example above of my use of Hattie's top strategy of "self-report grades" showed no understanding nor account of my students' motivations, previous learning, personality, interest and home life. Fortunately, I have a great deal of expertise and knowledge around these things, and this fact should not be allowed to be diminished by entrepreneurs of the type outlined here. Hattie's claim that you can separate all this complexity into precise individual influences, then via effect sizes, determine "what works best" is wrong and misleading (Slavin, 2018).

Biesta concurs, "…we have not yet conducted sufficient research in order to be able to encapsulate all factors, aspects and dimensions that make up the reality of education" (Biesta, 2010, p. 494). Biesta notes that there is more to education than just academic achievement and also the complexity of teaching requires teacher judgement. Instead, a narrow focus on academic achievement inevitably leads to "the erosion of responsible, accountable and democratic professionalism" (Biesta, 2015, p. 82). Dr Ben Goldacre (2016) concurs, "I think you'll find it's a bit more complicated than that".

Also, focusing on the aims of schooling will reveal that complexity (Reid, 2019). A scan of the aims of the various Educational systems around the world is enlightening. For example, my educational authority in Victoria defines three aims of Schooling—Improving Achievement, Engagement and Well-being. The narrow focus on NAPLAN, PISA and VL ignores and neglects the valuable work teachers do in trying to improve engagement and well-being. Teacher organisations should promote examples of what teachers do to improve engagement and well-being.

12 Teacher Effects Versus System Effects

How much do teachers matter? The focus on individual teachers and their unique approaches and practices has diminished during my career. Instead, the focus is on a standardised view of teaching and learning; that is, a "one size fits all" approach.

A look at one of the major themes from Hattie's work, teacher effects versus system effects, gives us some explanation for why this might be the case. In VL, Hattie argues "Teaching" (direct instruction, feedback, etc.) has an effect size more than eight times larger than "Working Conditions" (class size, adding more finances, etc.) (Hattie, 2009, p. 244). In his controversial document with the multinational company, Pearson, "What Does Not Work in Education: The politics of Distraction"

(Hattie, 2015), Hattie continues this argument about teacher effects versus system effects and names, among other system aspects, school autonomy, funding, class size, buildings, welfare and transformational leadership as “distractions” (pp. 25–27). This juxtaposition shows clearly why Hattie’s claims suit educational administrators. But why would it diminish teacher agency? Larsen, in his critique of Hattie gives us some clues, “Teachers get identified as the primary and indispensable learning factor and thereby as a public, expensive, and untrustworthy potential enemy. This amounts to scapegoat projection par excellence…” (Larsen, 2015, p. 11).

In my experience, it is this notion of the teacher being an “untrustworthy potential enemy” that is a significant reason for the increase in standardisation, accountability systems and measurements, that has stifled teacher agency and judgement.

Hattie’s juxtaposition has been promoted and endorsed by many principals and education department bureaucrats during their presentations. This is mostly done by presenting Hattie’s graphic (below) to argue that the focus of schooling should be on the teacher and not on system aspects. Also, this is used to justify the increased standardisation and accountability measures. Hattie’s graphic (Fig. 1) displays that teachers’ account for 30% of the effect on student achievement. Hattie stated that, “There have been many studies over the past few years that have asked this question about wherein lies the variance. Most have been conducted using Hierarchical Linear Modelling…” (Hattie, 2003, p. 1). But Hattie gives no specific reference to check this 30% figure and he displays this graphic in many of his presentations (Hattie, 2003, p. 3).

Not all researchers agree with Hattie’s claim. For example, Sahlberg and Bower make a totally different claim with totally different evidence, citing 1–14% compared to Hattie’s 30% claim. They write:

> Research on what explains students’ measured performance in school remains mixed. However, researchers generally agree that up to two-thirds of the variation in student achievement is explainable by individual student characteristics like family background and such variables. (Sahlberg & Bower, 2015, online article)

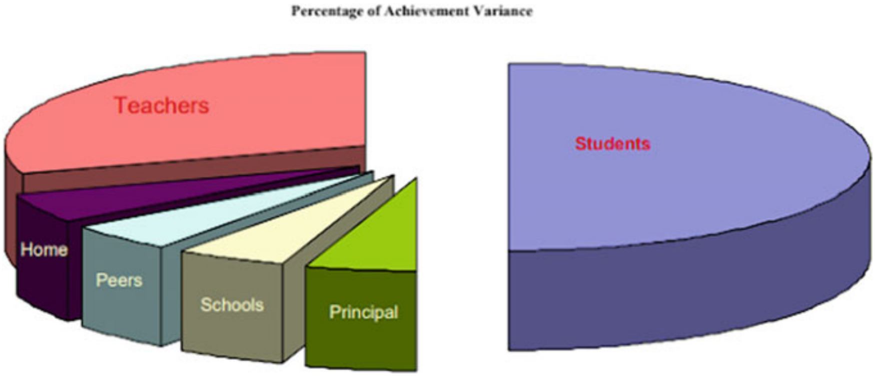

Fig. 1 Percentage of variance on student achievement

This is to say that most of what explains student achievement is beyond the control of teachers or even schools, so suggesting that teachers are the most important factor in improving the quality of education is simply rather silly.

Hattie's analysis transforms teachers into both the enemy and the scapegoat. Teachers will be blamed for all of the things that society doesn't get right. One important consideration is worth noting. One might think that Hattie is criticising the incompetent teacher—but, according to his own words, he's not. Instead, he's much more focused on "the average" teacher. He writes: "the devil in this story is not the negative, criminal, and incompetent teacher, but the average, let's get through the curricula… teacher" (Hattie, 2009, p. 258). This is an amazing criticism of many teachers across Australia—indeed, throughout the world—and represents Hattie's focus throughout VL. He seems oblivious to systemic and political influences and seems all too eager to focus the blame on the easy target: the teacher. While teaching can always be improved, Hattie's attack fails on two fronts. Firstly, he seems to think that teachers exist as islands, without pressures from other sources, and secondly, he ignores all the contextual factors that influence teachers and teaching. This constant teacher blaming is a contributor to widespread teacher dissatisfaction.

13 Widespread Teacher Dissatisfaction

As argued above, the focus on evidence-based education in Australia has led to a standardisation of curriculum and pedagogy, which in turn has led to a standardisation of instructional models and even lesson plans. This drive to standardisation removes the complexity of teaching and promotes simplistic check box accountability measures. While this might satisfy bureaucratic demands, it does little to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Below, I provide an example of why this is the case.

At a previous school, I failed a classroom assessment by a senior teacher because I did not write a learning objective on the board. This was a required part of the school's instructional model. I felt this was unnecessary as the textbook I was working on had a clear heading—"solving simultaneous equations". I actually used worked examples on the board to solve a number of simultaneous equations. I thought it would be stating the "bleeding obvious" to write on the board, "The aim of the lesson today, if you decide to accept it, is to learn how to solve simultaneous equations, by way of worked examples". I was confident, in my own experience and knowledge of the students in my class, that they all knew what we were learning. Simply writing it on the board wouldn't necessarily change that fact. Wescott (2022) gives examples of Victorian teachers with similar experience with the VTLM.

Even more concerningly, the fact that I had developed strong positive relationships, that all the students were engaged, that I knew the material well and tried to introduce it in an interesting and relevant way and then the students gave me positive reviews, went unnoticed. This is a scenario that is repeated in classrooms around Australia every school day. I can only imagine what it does for teacher morale.

These simplistic checklists and standardised approaches seem to focus on what is not done rather than what is done and is another way of belittling teachers. Others have told similar stories, which link all these themes of standardisation, leading to simplistic accountability measures and teacher belittling.

As reported in The Age newspaper, Gabbie Stroud resigned from her teaching position and wrote:

> Teaching—good teaching—is both a science and an art. Yet in Australia today [it]… is considered something purely technical and methodical that can be rationalised and weighed. But quality teaching isn't borne of tiered 'professional standards'. It cannot be reduced to a formula or discrete parts. It cannot be compartmentalised into boxes and 'checked off'. Good teaching comes from professionals who are valued. It comes from teachers who know their students, who build relationships, who meet learners at their point of need and who recognise that there's nothing standard about the journey of learning. We cannot forget the art of teaching—without it, schools become factories, students become products and teachers: nothing more than machinery.[13]

14 A Call to Action and Support for Those Already Taking Action: Teachers Empowering Themselves and One Another

So, how can one combat this instrumentality, accountability and standardisation regime? In the final section of this chapter, I analyse the field, commenting on current possibilities for action, and suggesting new ones. In Australia, The Australian Education Union has the most power to organise teacher's voices. The Victorian branch, representing around 50,000 teachers, promoted Teacher Agency as one of its priorities in 2019 and produced a curriculum policy document, designed by its members. The AEU has also lobbied our State Government (AEU, 2019).

14.1 Education Is Empowerment

In addition, the AEU does seek to publish articles that educate teachers. However, this needs to be taken further by challenging the simplistic notions of the "10 High Impact Strategies" and the 8 "What Works Best", and similar top-down accountability approaches that suck the life out of teaching. Once again, a simple strategy is to promote the many peer reviews that are critical of these simplistic strategies. Also, the AEU needs to take control and coordinate teacher agency and expertise to produce a pedagogy policy document. As explored in [Chapter Empowering Teachers to Know Their Strengths: Not a Silver Bullet But a Golden Goose by Ruth Smith and Lisa Starmer], an approach focused on pedagogical gifts is a strong, robust alternative that shows promise and is appealing to leaders and teachers alike.

14.2 Groups to Join, Groups to Form

The AEU, New South Wales Teachers Federation (NSWTF), Independent Education Union (IEU), Unions around the world and teachers' associations should also run courses for teachers to learn research methods, particularly the meta-meta-analyses technique which dominates Australian and English Education. Included in these courses should be summaries of the significant peer-review critique of this method. Also, these organisations should promote alternative reputable evidence bases, to serve as a counterpoint to the dominant hegemony within education rhetoric.

In addition, individual teachers have organised groups and forums to take some action. For example, Ollie Lovell has organised the Education Research Reading Room, where he posts podcasts with academics on a variety of issues. He interviewed two leading academics, both of whom are critical voices in the meta-meta-analyses debate (Dylan Wiliam and Adrian Simpson). Steven Kolber and Keith Heggart organised the Teach Meet which was the precursor to this book on teacher empowerment. It brought together a diversity of opinions and experience from all over Australia. Steven also runs Teach Meets in Melbourne regularly covering a host of relevant educational issues and he also runs the #edureading group, attracting teachers worldwide. Each month they read a research paper and reply to pertinent questions on FlipGrid.

Teacher Action groups such as Melbourne Educators for Social and Environmental Justice (MESEJ) run forums on topical issues. Relevant to this debate, they ran a forum—"Teachers Talking Back to Hattie", which attracted a lot of interest from teachers. Also, the Teacher Education Review (TER) runs regular podcasts providing opinion pieces, analysis and interviews with teachers and academics. TER is part of the broader Australian Educators Online Network, which also has other regular podcasts for teachers (Malcher, 2018).

14.3 Reconsider the Aims of Schooling for Shared Purpose

Reid (2019), Biesta (2015) and Sahlberg and Bower (2015) argue strongly that it has become necessary to revisit the aims of schooling and to challenge the narrow definitions used by Hattie and the EEF. For example, in Victoria, the Education Departments has listed 3 aims—Achievement, Engagement and Well-being. We need to bring back a focus on student engagement and well-being, as well as achievement. As stated above, this would promote the notion that teaching is complex, far more complex than Hattie's claims portray. This complexity would then allow richer debates about how to improve schooling in Australia and hopefully, challenge the simple checklist accountability systems. We must "Put professional judgement of teachers first or we'll never get the systemic education improvements we all want" (Ladwig, 2019, online article).

Teachers can write articles for reputable journals. For example, Biesta et al. (2020) confirms many of the issues raised in this article and calls for submissions for the Asia–Pacific Journal of Teacher Education. They identified 8 priorities, which all revolved around reclaiming teacher agency and a more complex examination of teaching (Biesta et al., 2020).

15 Conclusion

I started teaching in the Victorian Education System in 1980. The dominance of this Evidence-Based Education agenda, particularly in the form of John Hattie, over the last 15 years, has been my most significant concern. In my view, this focus has not improved Education in Australia. We need to at least start the debate, make public the critique and then work towards improving our system. Teachers must take a strong role in this.

Notes

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Challenges and Possibilities for Global Teacher Empowerment

Steven Kolber

Abstract Empowering teachers might seem like a lofty, and perhaps unattainable goal. There are many different challenges that seek to prevent this occurring. This chapter outlines forces that disempower teachers and those factors that are working against an empowered profession for teachers. The nature of neoliberalism and its history is described and the manner in which these ideas impact recruitment and retention of teachers are analysed. Those groups and organisations working to safeguard conditions and promote teacher excellence are presented and ways that they can be leveraged to empower teachers are discussed. Emerging approaches that promote teacher excellence through role flexibility and leadership development are proposed as possible ways towards empowerment. Finally, possible avenues to pursue solutions to empowering teachers are proposed.

1 Introduction

The empowerment of teachers is an active and purposeful process; it does not occur without conscious effort. In order for it to succeed, there is a requirement for an awareness of those forces that challenge teacher empowerment, and how they might be overcome. It requires more than a nebulous concept such as ‘improving teacher status’ or indeed ‘teacher quality’, and it is more nuanced and multifaceted than an exploration of teachers’ pay and conditions and the recruitment of ‘better quality’ candidates. It means giving teachers a voice, platforming and sharing their ideas and allowing them to influence important elements of their profession and the work that they do. This chapter will provide a grounding of the state of teacher empowerment in Australia, and challenges to it; the manner in which groups and actors are working to promote it; and finally provide a frame for the types of solutions that may be possible.

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2 The State of Teacher Empowerment Within Australia and Challenges to It

There are approximately 270,000 teachers working with close to 4 million students in 9500 schools across Australia (Heffernan et al., 2019). This is a large group of intellectuals, and they are often expected to deal with a great many issues, from road safety to consent training. Yet, at the same time, teachers and the profession as a whole are regularly derided and criticised, cast as lazy or unintelligent. Broader discussions of teacher status often miss the psychological impact that the lack of trust and respect displayed through media channels and from the broader community has upon those in the profession. The question of teacher status is important, but also well-rehearsed. It is the starting point, but not the focus for this chapter (and indeed, this whole book). This volume approaches the issue of poor teacher status through the lens of the positive and the agential, teacher empowerment. The absence of teacher empowerment will have negative impacts upon teacher well-being, workplace safety (Lynch, 2020; Sheehan et al., 2020) and ultimately challenge the nature of ongoing teacher recruitment in Australia and globally (Singh et al., 2019; Berry, 2004; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Manuel, 2003; Shine, 2015).

There are many threats to teacher empowerment. Below, I discuss concerns regarding the retention of teachers (and especially early career teachers), the ambiguity of teachers as valued by society and issues related to recruitment of teachers.

3 Ongoing Concerns Around the Retention of Teachers

There are numerous factors that influence the empowerment of teachers. One of the most obvious challenges is the ongoing attrition from the profession. Teachers gain confidence and are more likely to be empowered the longer they spend in the profession; thus the early departure from the profession of teachers means that there is less opportunity for both individual and collective empowerment. There are high attrition rates within the first five years of a teacher's career (Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Kim & Loadman, 1994; Manuel, 2003; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). According to the media, it's also widely believed, mostly erroneously (Weldon, 2018) that it occurs among 30, 40 or even 50% of teachers (Moore, 2019; Schipp, 2017; Stroud, 2017, 2018). It is quite possible that teachers are leaving the profession in concerning amounts, but this is difficult to clearly establish (Kelchtermans, 2017). However, the impact of this misinformation on teachers is not insignificant either. The global trend of newer teachers leaving does serve as a useful bellwether for the frailty and insecurity of our profession. We are truly 'the profession that eats its young'. For those who survive these early years, the positive outcomes upon the remaining teacher's well-being are well-established, but less able to be viewed in a reliable, or statistically robust fashion. For this reason, at times reliance on union-supported research is required. These studies often draw from a skewed or limited sample, yet the very fact that union-supported research is often the only data available speaks to the broader issue of teacher empowerment and the role of democracy within schools (Heffernan et al., 2019).

4 Societal Value and Perceived Societal Value Disconnect

Correlations between teacher status and student outcomes have been tentatively established (The Varkey Foundation, 2018), but improving teacher status needs to be a focus for its own intrinsic benefits. As will be explored elsewhere in this book, stressed teachers create anxious students and we posit the converse is also true. We cannot expect exemplary behaviour, teaching or practice from an otherwise overlooked and disempowered profession who exist only for the success of their charges, never for their own value to, or within society.

Recent research (Heffernan et al., 2019, p. 4) exposes a compelling dilemma: 'although the public feels that teachers are respected and trusted, this is not transferring to teachers feeling underappreciated for the work they do'. Perhaps the simplest solution to improving this disconnect would seem to be improving the pay, but this does not seem to prove the cure-all that many imagine it to be. Just as the public underestimate teachers' workload, and actual working hours (The Varkey Foundation, 2018), this goes hand-in-hand with teachers' perceived lack of equivalence between teacher pay and teacher time spent at work (Heffernan et al., 2019). Importantly, teachers do not respond to pay incentives as powerfully as other professions (Baugh & Stone, 1982; Vegas & Umansky, 2005; West & Mykerezi, 2011), but the positive signal that pay equivalence with other high-status professions, would send is clear to the well-educated teaching profession.

In addition, there is a disconnect between how teachers feel they are valued by society, and how society as a whole says that they value teachers. This dichotomy is a good illustration of the disempowerment felt by the profession. The 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides some guiding statistics to this discussion of teacher status it must be noted that according to the OECD's website (https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/), this study covers 'about 260,000 teachers in 15,000 schools across 48 countries and economies'. However, it 'focuses on lower secondary education, but also provides information about primary and upper secondary education for those countries that choose either of the options that address these levels'. Notably, it does not cover all teachers, or all nations. Nevertheless, it provides one of the most extensive and useful starting points for discussions of this type. Positive responses (agree or strongly agree) to the statement 'I think that the teaching profession is valued in society' across participating OECD nations were 26%, and in Australia, 45%. This can be broken down to 47% for those teachers who have been in the profession for 4 years or less, and 44% for those who have been in the profession for 5 years or more (Thomson & Hillman, 2019). Despite this fact, teachers' positive responses to the statement 'all in all, I am satisfied with my job' was 90%, with 88% from teachers within their first 5 years and 91% for teachers beyond that point. This does display a difference between those teachers who last beyond the high attrition rate within their first five years. It demonstrates that the job itself is rewarding, and by and large, teachers feel that the work they do is important. Clearly, then, the answers as to why teachers feel undervalued must lie elsewhere.

The survey also shows that teachers' self-reported value within society is low among those nations economically developed enough to be included in the OECD. Australia's rating is above this but still depressingly low at 50%. To be clear: the survey indicates that teachers are generally satisfied with their job, but do not feel valued by society. This speaks to the spheres of influence that teachers can and cannot influence. For example, teachers often have a level of control (for the moment, at least) over what happens within their own classrooms. However, they are almost completely absent from policy discussions. The OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) data notes that 14% of teachers believe that policymakers in their country value their views and only 24% believe they could influence education policy (Hollweck & Doucet, 2020; OECD, 2019). There are even issues with teachers influencing policy even within their own school which is quite the indictment of our 'profession', which will be discussed in detail later within this chapter.

5 Recruitment

In addition to the high rate of attrition from the profession and low perception of societal value, an extensive survey of union leadership over multiple continents and nations found that, for significantly more than half of respondents (60% in 2015 and 69% in 2018), the teaching profession was not considered attractive by teachers in their countries (Symeonidis & Stromquist, 2020). Further, a nationwide Australian study by Monash University found that, among the 2444 teachers who responded, only 56% reported being satisfied with their job (Heffernan et al., 2019). This response is much lower than the previous TALIS data, and it appears to be accelerating, too. It also suggests that these teachers are unlikely to promote the benefits of their profession which is likely to further negatively impact recruitment. These data points, though different, are highly concerning and should serve as a call to action for policymakers and governments. We stand above a cliff of significant teacher shortages, both locally and internationally. Indeed, in response to the statement 'I feel that the Australian public appreciate teachers', 71% of responses were negative. Crucially, this piece of research suggested a disconnect between the public's responses to the survey and teachers' view of this, with 82% of public respondents ($n = 71{,}000+$) answering in the positive (19% 'well respected' and '63% moderately respected') for views on teacher respect. This pattern of negative perception of teaching and its impact on recruitment seems to be a challenge faced within many systems, globally.

6 The Underlying Cause: Neoliberalism

The bassline that ties the entire song of teacher disempowerment together can be traced back to the broad economic and political shift towards neoliberalism. However, rather than explore this concept in detail, which will occur elsewhere in this book, a brief history of its development and influence upon education will be provided. Neoliberalism is often referred to in a highly disconnected and academic manner and is used to explain many faults within liberal views of education specifically. It is conceived of as an idea contrary to Keynesianism (the belief in a strong government that should intervene to limit some of the excesses of a market economy), neoliberalism is the world view that the capitalist free market and limited support or controls will allow human entrepreneurialism to flourish.

These ideas took root with Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, with each turning to the perceived most un-entrepreneurial space, education and calling for it to be overturned in line with the concept of neoliberalism. The movement towards anti-teacher rhetoric in modern times can be traced to 'A nation at risk' in the United States (Berry, 2011; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and 'The Black papers on Education' in the United Kingdom (Cox & Dyson, 1969, 1971; Pilcher & Wagg, 2005) with Ravitch (2020) proposing that this movement continued apace and the 'disruption playbook' was pursued within the United States through the 'No Child Left Behind Act' of 2001, and 'Race to the Top' policy of 2009.

With England and the United States being Australia's two dominant allies, this line of thinking was quickly mimicked in Australian political rhetoric and soon after, policy framing (Fitzgerald, 2011; Mulheron, 2014). This in turn led to the denigration of education and increased invasive legislation to this effect which obscured the core characteristics of education. Traditional neoliberal ideas position the public sector as slow, uninspired and antiquated. This includes the education system. This analysis is unfair; for example, Mazzucato (2018) posits the dynamism of the public sector and its role in supporting long tail and future-focused investment in innovations that the free market rarely pursues due to slow returns. Within education, COVID-19 and the quick response of remote learning showed this ability to pivot and continue with learning, in a way that bucks the dominant rhetoric and thinking around public schools as dull, factory-like places (Dintersmith, 2018; Robinson & Aronica, 2016; Robinson & Lee, 2011). This contrasts with the vision of 'Big Ed Tech' and edu-business (Hogan, 2016; Hogan & Thompson, 2017; Selwyn, 2016; Williamson & Hogan, 2020) companies as the sole hives of innovation; indeed, school, and specifically teachers, can fulfil this role as well. In reality, 'Big Ed Tech' continually refreshes and reframes the same old technologies, focused on simple, Pavlovian, Skinner Boxes that appeal to the lowest forms of education and knowledge (Selwyn, 2019). Though a full exploration of the significant influence of Big Ed Tech is beyond the scope of this chapter, it fits neatly between neoliberalism and the 'datafication' (Biesta, 2005) of education.

7 Quantifying Learning, the 'Neoliberalisation' of Global Education

At the global level, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) caters to economically developed nations, while the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) caters to those nations less economically developed. Each group seeks to have a consistent method of assessment, through the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Program of International Student Assessment-Development (PISA-D) in the hopes of gaining an overview of education globally (Gorur, 2011). By doing so, both groups are chasing statistical, quantitative measures of many elements that are difficult to quantify, and perhaps should remain largely qualitative. With the widespread adoption of quantitative measurement tying in neatly to the global neoliberal and managerial world view that so often seems ill-suited to education (Gorur, 2014, 2016), this testing agenda opens up pathways for 'global league tables'. These ought to never exist or exist in a form only accessible to those appropriately knowledgeable of psychometrics, and comparative education researchers. Instead, these tests and their reported results lead to 'policy shopping' across nations that are completely different economically and culturally, seeking to solve human problems with crude, typically underfunded and ill-fitting policy structures.

It is telling that the PISA test is an Australian 'innovation' and that, even with a Prime Minister's commitment to ranking improvements (Gorur & Wu, 2015), our nation still cannot improve upon a test that we ostensibly created (Thomson et al., 2019). The complexity and even some of the concepts that underpin it are beyond the scope of this chapter but are well worth exploring with criticality (Gorur, 2011, 2014; Gorur & Wu, 2015). The reason that results have not improved is simple: teachers' conditions have not improved, and policies focused on 'back to basics' produce basic outcomes (Zhao, 2018). This is largely due to inaccurate media reporting on these tests and what could be very useful information when engaged with at an appropriate level of expertise, becomes a widely misunderstood political football that obscures much of the nuance contained within its results. The central question need not be, 'is it possible to compare and contrast systems as intricate as education', but rather, 'is it worth doing?'. These tests and their reporting lead to simplified responses at the policy level, including narrowed curriculum and further pressure and disempowerment of teachers (Reid, 2015). Due to the way that these tests simplify the complex spaces, teaching occurs in and by making the complexity of the work rendered less valuable than a de-identified series of test items.

At the global level, teachers have become 'objects of intervention' through growing teacher and school accountability practices (Heffernan, 2018), standardised testing, endless new curricular areas, decentralisation and privatisation (Bascia & Stevenson, 2017), under a system of professionalism from above rather than professionalism from within (Evetts, 2011) and 'New Public Management' (NPM) (Symeonidis & Stromquist, 2020). It is for this reason that the global growth of neoliberalism and its associated forms of managerialism bring with them work intensification and increased demands (MacBeath, 2012) for teachers' work.

8 Promoters and Defenders of Empowered Teachers

With those factors that challenge, and limit teacher empowerment foregrounded, it's timely to consider those groups and actors that actively promote or defend empowered teachers or seek to lift up those who are not. Admittedly, those groups that can be said to be overtly promoting teacher status, in this sense a conception of all teachers and the broader profession as being worthy of praise and esteem, are relatively limited. It could be suggested that by promoting teacher excellence, organisations are promoting broader teacher status, but this is not necessarily accurate as will be explored here.

9 Safeguarding and Improving Teachers' Conditions

One way that teachers may engage with policy and have their voices heard is through union engagement and activism. Union activism or ongoing discussions with Government (depending on the political climate of the nation, or of the time period) are of crucial importance to teacher status as these actions ensure that there is a 'safeguarding' effect on the profession (Symeonidis & Stromquist, 2020). Safeguarding here means defending or protecting those members whose rights are being threatened, halting any backsliding of conditions and improving, by gradations, the workload and broader conditions of teachers across agreements in developed nations. It is pertinent to note that in less developed nations, union membership is life-threatening and taken on at great personal risk (Goldson, 2020). In Australia, the relatively conciliatory position between unions and governments means that this safeguarding can occur and continue. Just as in the broader education sector, unions are not without failings, but the existence of, and strength of unions in nations effectively defend against a range of challenging movements such as: privatisation; poorly, or untrained teachers and entirely computer-centric delivery of instruction to name but some of the most recent threats and challenges. The manner in which they do this is crucial: through democratic processes, by engaging teachers with media, policy and political discourse as a means of empowerment.

It is also worth noting that the media's depiction of unions and 'pigeon-holing' of their role curtails their ability to effectively promote teacher status beyond safety and towards excellence (Oldham, 2020). Unions are often viewed as cumbersome, reactive (Fitzgerald, 2010), slow to respond and bureaucratic—this is a mischaracterisation that should be recognisable to most teachers (Symeonidis & Stromquist, 2020). As a modern counterpoint, leveraging social media-based actions has at times proven widely effective: for example, the 'Badass Teachers' movement (Naison, 2014; Ravitch, 2020; Seybold, 2015) is just one example of modern union-centric activism that moves beyond mere ‘Clicktivism’ (Bascia & Stevenson, 2017; Stevenson, 2017). Movements of these kinds show that there is significant space for union renewal (Bascia & Stevenson, 2017; Gilliland & Stevenson, 2015; Stevenson, 2018) within organisations and seek to challenge the media’s perception of unions as defending lazy and failing teachers (Ravitch, 2020). Unions need to be both a voice *for* the teachers (Stevenson et al., 2018), but also give a voice *to* teachers, this is no small challenge. Unions need to seek to continue to engage with pedagogical matters and the manner that these choices or directives impact upon workload and move continuously towards promoting teacher professionalism and excellence. Engagement of this kind is on the rise nationally, including examples featured within this book, from the Australian Education Union (AEU) Victoria, New South Wales Teachers Federation, and the Independent Education Union’s (IEU) branches.

In Australia, large organisations that could be supportive of safeguarding teacher conditions do so with such zeal and enthusiasm without then considering the following two elements of promoting teacher status broadly, or teacher excellence in the specific. Groups such as the Victoria Institute of Teaching (VIT), New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) and to a lesser extent also the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) focus on minimum standards, non-compliance and teacher failure (Crowther & Boyne, 2016). In their claimed role as safeguards against the worst failings of a broad profession, these groups absent themselves from the other considerations of promoting teacher status and teacher excellence that I feel are crucial to empowering our profession, as professionals.

10 Promoting Teacher Excellence

When considering who is promoting teaching empowerment, a third concept needs to be considered: teacher excellence. Discussions of teacher excellence rightly differentiate between the idea of ‘teacher quality’ and ‘teaching quality’ (Darling-Hammond, 1997, 2000, 2004; Wiliam, 2016). Teacher quality remains one of the ongoing challenges in educational research, with an abundance of different inventories and measures being thrown at the problem, but even through the reductive rubric of students’ test scores, these attempts have failed (Wiliam, 2016). While assessing teaching quality is possible, it requires numerous (thirty or more) human observations, with the associated concerns around inter-rater reliability, instrument quality and other assurances. As a result, this process is costly, labour-intensive and time-consuming, which means it cannot be scaled and only occurs in very small trials to prove that it is possible.

What’s left behind then, when teacher quality and teaching quality are eschewed is ‘teacher excellence’ which draws heavily from the ‘great man theory’ of history, (Carlyle, 1993) which is widely problematised in broader leadership and educational leadership scholarship (Netolicky, 2020; Niesche & Heffernan, 2020; Organ, 1996). This concept invariably moves beyond and in spite of actual classroom practice. If a teacher's in-class quality cannot be clearly assessed, without significant investment of time and money (Wiliam, 2016), then considerations of teacher excellence then largely become reliant on a teacher's leadership, as well as their engagement beyond their natural or native sphere of the classroom, staff room and board room. It expands to consider policy discussions, union roles, delivery of professional learning at conferences, elements of 'Edu-celebrity' (Dousay et al., 2018; Eacott, 2017, 2020) and other community building and collaborative activities. Each of these elements is notable for the fact that they exist almost exclusively outside of a school or classroom. It is for this reason that the concept of a 'teacher-leader' or 'middle leader' (Day & Grice, 2019; Grice, 2019; Lipscombe et al., 2020) embodying 'teacher excellence' within school's daily work is increasingly rare.

11 Documenting Teacher Excellence

Programmes such as AITSL's 'Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers' (HATs or HALTS) programmes and the US's National Board-Certified Teachers (NBCT) each seek to promote teacher excellence. But the process for becoming 'certified' invariably requires a significant investment of time, primarily spent on documentation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2001) and is only ever completed by a tiny portion of the entire profession without any opportunities to share their established skills and knowledge. In Australia, AITSL's HALT and HALT programme is so small that there were only 134 across Australia in 2019 (AITSL, 2020), with patchy pickup across states and jurisdictions. Notably, the highest proportion among this group were 83 government teachers, suggesting perhaps a greater need to seek external recognition among this group. Time spent on these programmes is spent on documenting, listing, reflecting and proving excellence, with the onus laying squarely in the lap of these teachers themselves, thereby bypassing the costs of actually checking for teaching and teacher quality outlined above. This quote summarises many of the issues with this approach:

> In this study we provided evidence that elementary level NBCTs in the state of Arizona are judged to be superior teachers and leaders in their field by their supervisors, and do, on average, raise student achievement more over the course of a year than do non-NBCTs. (Vandevoort et al., 2004, p. 1)

This means drawing on standardised test scores, supervision and pitting teachers against one another in a competitive arena tied to the former two flawed criteria for evaluation. By raising some teachers above others based on faulty measures, the overall impact on teachers is one of disempowerment.

12 New, Emerging Alternatives

Barnett Berry (2011, 2013) through his Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) initiatives and books ‘Teacherpreneur: teachers who lead and don’t leave’ and ‘Teaching 2030’ spotlighted teacher excellence in the realms of leadership and boundary-spanning teacher engagement. He proposes that this type of work can occur with or without the types of recognition outlined above, but that recognition can be an important element in empowering excellent teachers to share their ideas beyond their context. His book, ‘Teacherpreneur…’ (2011) particularly commented on a, then new, form of teacher leadership that involved an online learning presence and sharing of best practice in addition to and beyond the school setting. This type of boundary-spanning work that seeks to challenge traditional silos that separate early career, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and higher education and make communication difficult across these sectors, is crucial. This type of boundary-spanning, networked teacher, wholeheartedly a learned and respected professional is also encapsulated within the concept of a ‘Pracademic’ (Kolber & Heggart, 2021; Marzano et al., 2019; Netolicky, 2019; Panda, 2014; Posner, 2009; Powell et al., 2018; Walker, 2010). Barnett’s work on promoting teachers and teaching quality were forerunners to the Varkey Foundation’s Global Teacher Prize that followed. Established in 2015 as one of the more visible forms of recognition for teacher excellence, with its 1-million-dollar prize being significant. This award is not without its critics (Burstow, 2014; Mackenzie, 2007; Pezaro, 2016), but viewed across time, it does show a clear line of teaching success. With the naming of Alexandra Harper and Cameron Paterson, a chapter author within this book, Australia began a consistent representation within the top 50, currently totaling 13. The great majority of these teachers are drawn from public schools, proving them to be hives of innovation (Reid, 2015) and disagreeing with the dominant rhetoric of failing schools and lazy teachers. The 12th and 13th Australian teachers to be named to this list are myself and Bec West, also an author within this volume, displaying what is possible for teachers in terms of promotion of teacher excellence.

In addition to the exclusion of teachers from engaging with their own policies and practices within their own schools and broader policy, there is also an absence of teacher promotion and praise at a systemic level. One obvious way to promote teacher excellence is to support and develop teacher leadership in clear and inclusive ways.

13 Recognition of Teacher Leadership

The 2018 TALIS report (OECD, 2019) showed that only 42% of principals reported that teachers had significant involvement in deciding school policies, curriculum and instruction. This is a low percentage for a very low bar. If teachers are not even entrusted to input into the locations where they work, why would they be included into broader policy work, at the departmental, state or national level? Teacher Collaboration was also low, with 'discussing learning development of specific students' (61%) and 'exchanging teaching materials with colleagues' (47%) being the most common types of collaboration (OECD, 2019). This shows the way that teachers' limited time and expectations of sharing beyond their classroom also makes the profession less collaborative as a result.

While in strong systems, teachers have career progression pathways that more closely resemble a lattice than a ladder (Berry, 2004), with options to engage with policy, student management, pedagogical leadership and departmental roles. This policy configuration minimises the need for teacher promotion of excellence, as teachers can experience multiple career trajectories and return value across multiple stages of their career. Leadership roles for teachers should include expectations to contribute beyond their own schools and develop tools and skill sets to do so effectively.

Finland and Singapore typify this progression in dramatically different ways, with Finland being more open and flexible, while Singapore's approach is more mandated (Berry, 2011). It is not the implementation of this leadership and career progression structure that is key, but rather the manner in which they empower and promote teachers' natural tendencies towards improvement and allow them opportunities to do so.

Rather than these approaches, flexible or well planned, either of which would greatly improve teacher empowerment, the dominant leadership paradigm in Australia is and has remained managerialism. This is referred to more precisely as 'New Public Management' (NPM) and is typified by privatisation, managerialism, performance management and accountability (Symeonidis & Stromquist, 2020; Tolofari, 2005). Working together, these practices bring neoliberalism and its thinking into education, seeking to make schools more 'business-like'. Each of these items individually represent challenges to teacher's ability to behave democratically, pinching our status and autonomy as workers, while also removing status and limiting the autonomy of leaders. Managerialism is a legitimate form and practice of leadership, but its predominance is problematic. Despite extensive research and promotion of instructional leadership, this form has remained exceedingly rare in Australian schools (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2008, 2020). A simple proposal for empowering teachers is allowing a clear structure for leadership where teachers can be recognised and supported for the skills that they have developed to participate in these roles using either of the methods outlined above.

14 Solutions

This book sits astride the tension between 'market-centric thinking' (Caplan, 2018) and 'Human capital theory' (Fitzsimons, 1999). On one side is the idea that marketisation will improve education through 'Disruptive Innovation' (Christensen et al., 2001), on the other is the painful, time-insensitive process of building and developing human capital, without any shortcuts being taken.

14.1 Empowering Teachers to Allow the System to Be Flipped

Perhaps the most complete vision for uplifting and empowering teachers comes from the 'Flip the System' series of books, begun by Jelmer Evers and René Kneyber, with 'Het Alternatief' (The Alternative) (Evers & Kneyber, 2013). This movement flowed into 'Flip the System' (Evers & Kneyber, 2015) book followed by United Kingdom and (Rycroft-Smith & Dutaut, 2018) Australian versions (Netolicky et al., 2018) with the United States volume being the most recently published (Soskil, 2021). This series has consistently called for a reconsideration of teacher's involvement in policy and leadership positions by 'flipping the system'. The contributing educators within the series showcase examples of excellence and innovative initiatives, but true to the time poor nature of educators, each innovation was singular. Perhaps, these books are among the only places that these examples of excellence were shared. This is something that needs to be addressed, primarily by reducing the workload and time burden upon teachers to allow for greater sharing and a genuine human exchange of ideas. Davenport (2005) notes that knowledge workers cannot be managed in an industrial, Neo-Fordist (Hodkinson, 1997) or Neo-Taylorist (Au, 2011; Eacott, 2017) manner. They need time to do the work of thinking. Australian teachers are working an average of 44.8 h a week, six hours longer than the international average of 38.8 h a week (Carey, 2019; OECD, 2019). This means that existing excellence spaces cannot be shared due to time poverty. Above and beyond the time issue, if we conceptualise this flipping of the system as a revolutionary takeover, the sad fact is that due to the silence of teacher influence across multiple levels, the 'would-be soldiers' of this revolution are neither trained nor prepared for the work required to make good on this. Something that we seek to redress, or at least outline possible avenues for this to change.

14.2 Empowering Teachers Within Schools

What is required now, as much as ever, is some future-focused thinking (Reid, 2018) at the policy level, accepting more flexible career paths for teacher-leaders that involve school and system policy, including digital leadership as well as other forms of natural, native innovations and sharing already taking place through positive deviance despite time poverty and administrivia. With time made available, teachers can engage in cross-institutional, transdisciplinary (Gibbs & Beavis, 2020) teams, while being willing to accept criticisms of public education and its shortcomings. This would include welcoming parents into the conversation without ceding our expertise. While also sharing best practice in online interactions and collegiality (Bergviken

Rensfeldt et al., 2018) to build upon the genuine world-leading excellence that is already within our system, but not being meaningfully shared due to time restraints, overwork and a lack of empowerment.

14.3 Empowerment Through Unionism

There is clearly a place for unionism to develop teacher empowerment. This relies upon teachers to raise their voices, speak back to power and become part of what Ravitch (2020) rousingly refers to as 'the revolution'. These actions can and will require a range of different sites of challenge, including, but certainly not limited to, the academic and policy domains.

14.4 Empowered Teachers Enacting Democratic Practices in Schooling

An extension of this human-centric vision for improvement involves the action of democracy as the process by which teacher empowerment takes place. We propose that empowered teachers are much more likely to empower their students and by doing so, improve our societies, albeit in small ways. For those teachers seeking to become more empowered, the initial steps involve finding those groups and individuals, outlined above, who will provide support to them through this process.

15 Conclusion

Crucially, this chapter has shown ways that large organisations, groups and movements either successfully empower teachers, limit this possibility, or disempower teachers. It shows ways that teachers can engage with these groups to empower themselves and warns against those elements that limit this possibility. Ultimately, teacher empowerment is largely something that needs to be solved within individual teachers and by groups of teachers (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2019), by leveraging the groups and ideas outlined here.

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Empowered Teachers Enacting Democratic Practices

The goal of empowered teachers is a worthy end in itself, but it is only one part of the ultimate focus on this book. The second part is about how empowered teachers democratise schooling. A democratic school, in the singular, can be conceived of in many different ways, as explored elsewhere within this volume. However, the broader goal of democratic schooling expands this singular site to the system itself, with possibilities for a wider range of possibilities, and extends the notion of democracy and active citizenship beyond the school fence and into the broader community. Indeed, the limits of the concept of schooling outlined here is quite expansive, if one takes the professional lens of a global group of teachers working together to educate future generations. No teacher, no cog of global education needs to labour in silence, disconnected from the other cogs within the system. Taking this view of teachers, then expanding it to students would mean a significant shift in the approach to education globally. In a truly interconnected world, students can theoretically access any teacher via digital means, as could any teacher colleagues. For these reasons, a global view of empowered teachers would potentially mean sharing of resources, content and pedagogical approaches beyond borders, and where legal and appropriate, making learning resources freely available to students, regardless of location.

We view education itself as a democratic necessity. The very concept of democracy relies upon having an informed and educated population. This democratising effort, where all citizens, in this case of the world, have access to education to become part of an informed citizenry would bring great benefits globally. The United Nations Social Development Goals (SDGs) places great value in this work, and provide an opportunity for students and teachers to view global education as a shared goal and purpose.

However, one of the challenges facing educators is determining how to make these lofty ideals a reality within schools and classrooms. This section explicitly explores practices that can be used to do that. It is important to pause here and note that while we would support a movement towards a democratic schooling system where every member within the system has a voice and an opportunity to influence the direction of the system, we recognise that even within a poorly led school, or one where leadership more closely resembles a dictatorship, these practices are possible, and still hold great utility.

The oasis of calm that a singular classroom can be, means that teachers have autonomy and agency within this space, even if nowhere else. We wholeheartedly support the fact that the expertise and skill located within this classroom, in the person of teacher, should be disseminated widely, but note that even in the absence of this, democracy can be made manifest. Democracy located solely within a classroom is important, so that the students progressing through our education system have a realistic opportunity to participate in this manner. This is opposed to the manner that students are typically viewed within their schooling, not as 'active citizens', or 'democratic citizens', but rather as 'citizens in waiting'. In an Australian context, there are many that would consider a student a full citizen only when they achieve voting rights, as with anything else, the likelihood that they would be successful in this role without any particular preparation or practice for this seems clearly fraught.

Nina Burridge and John Buchanan raise the expectations of teachers, outlining the ways that they might expand their influence beyond the four walls of their classroom, considering global issues and acting to address them. A refocussing on what is important within education, beyond mere data points and international tests, moving teachers into an agential role unspools many possibilities for activism and intervention, both locally and abroad.

Cameron Paterson and Meredith Gavrin provide a range of techniques, including those suitable for history classes that can be used to make teaching less dictatorial and more collaborative. They call upon teachers to consider the world they teach within and seek to develop prosocial skills among our students to address this.

Jemina Kolber provides a practical and hands-on explanation of how she uses Socratic circles within her classroom to promote student confidence and to develop their skills of oracy within a democratic framework. She outlines her context and why this method is relevant to her views on education asking you to consider if it similarly might serve your needs.

Teachers as Changemakers in an Age of Uncertainty

Nina Burridge and John Buchanan

Abstract The chapter examines the role of teachers as changemakers in increasingly challenging times, not just for schooling, but for many facets of society as we know it. It explores the challenges for effective teaching and learning in the increasingly complex classroom contexts in which learning occurs. These complexities include the impact of technology, the pervading influence of social media and the nature of parental expectations, coupled with the administrative demands of education departments and governments whose priorities are directed to the measurement of educational success through international testing and rankings, typically of basic skills. These developments find themselves nested in broader processes of climate change, disparity of access to resources and threats to democracy.

The chapter will argue that teachers in Australia have become the scapegoats for an education system which appears to be in decline in terms of global rankings. It sets out to illustrate that perhaps the real issue is that education has become entrapped by corporate managerialism and driven by economic imperatives. The result is the creation of an education system which has lost its direction on the real, human, purposes of education. Given this context, there is an urgent need to build confidence in the teaching profession as experts in their fields and realign the purposes of education as Martha Nussbaum (Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2019; The struggle within: Education and human development. ABC Religion and Ethics. https://www.abc.net.au/religion/martha-nussbaum-education-for-democracy/11191430. Accessed November 2019, 2019) notes, to Education for Human Development. The notion of education for human development incorporates some essential elements, including: critical thinking—an essential skill in times where social media and 'fake news' form an increasing part of life in a post-truth era; understanding of difference—the capacity to see oneself as a member of a heterogenous nation and world, and the development of a narrative imagination—the ability to develop empathy and see the world from another's perspective. Teachers must be agents of change for this to happen.

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The development of confident, critical and active young minds whose values system reflects and amplifies the principles of a just and equitable society will not happen without committed and fearless teachers who can challenge the status quo.

1 Introduction

While developing this chapter, one of the authors was by chance in conversation with a 90-year-old friend and asked her if she remembered any of her teachers at school. Her answer was immediate. Her favourite teacher was Mr Rose, her French teacher. Being new to the school and only 11 or 12 years old, she recalled him as a kind teacher, with a very personable manner, one who engaged the students in conversations in class which showed he valued their ideas and opinions. It was surprising to the author that someone of this friend's age could still remember a teacher from nearly 80 years past. Clearly, Mr Rose made a lasting impression on her. It affirmed numerous educational reports (Chang-Kredl et al., 2017; Hattie, 2003) on the important role teachers can play in young people's lives. For many teachers, the capacity to make a positive difference to their students' lives is a key aim of their professional life. An article in Edutopia makes the following comment on the importance of teachers:

> In 2017, when we asked our readers to describe the traits of a life-changing teacher, very few of the responses were about test scores or academics. People overwhelmingly said that great teachers make their students feel safe and loved, believe in their students, model patience, and help their students reach their full potential—all qualities that remain largely unmeasured.

Society has long contemplated the purposes of a 'good' education and debated this construct from at least the time of Socrates in western civilisation and Confucius in ancient China, and potentially for 60,000 years in Australia. Education impacts each of us in many ways and in so many facets of our lives. Our life trajectories, individually and collectively, are often shaped, not just by our capacity to succeed in examinations, but also by the values and attitudes that we absorb at school. Yet in the twenty-first century, success in Education is largely relegated to results in international standardized testing regimes such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (Volante et al., 2019). These test cycles have promoted an international culture of competition and educational regimentation as nations strive to improve their international rankings—focusing on their best students, rather than the best for their students.

Further, the corporatisation of education at all levels has shifted its main purpose to the preparation of students for employment and economic success rather than the pursuit of a well-rounded education that prepares students for participation in all facets of society within a moral framework of what it means to be a good active citizen. This has led many academics to question the nature and value of these testing regimes and the monetisation of education, to the extent that in 2014 a group of leading international academics sent an open letter to the Dr Andreas Schleicher, Director of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s PISA programme noting the problems with international testing regimes, including:

> By emphasising a narrow range of measurable aspects of education, Pisa takes attention away from the less measurable or immeasurable educational objectives like physical, moral, civic and artistic development, thereby dangerously narrowing our collective imagination regarding what education is and ought to be about. (*The Guardian*, 6 May 2014 online)

The increased marketisation of education has created problems not just for teachers and schools, but society as a whole. The question of what constitutes a good education in current socio-economic, environmental, and political contexts is ever-present. Particularly at a time when our influence over the planet, and over each other (through advances in communication and other technologies), is expanding, students must be helped to build their knowledge, critical thinking skills, creativity and resilience to enable them to cope with the challenges they will face in the decades to come (Robertson, 2009).

Not only do we have numerous long-lasting political conflicts and civil wars which have created a major crisis for refugees seeking resettlement, we also are experiencing a global pandemic that has crippled the world economy and certainly challenged our focus on globalisation, global citizenship and humanity. Our young people will also face the environmental challenges of rising temperatures and sea levels, and increased volatility in our weather patterns, alongside potential food insecurity and climate refugees, emanating from carbon emissions.

2 The Narrowing View of Teachers' Work

The work of teachers is becoming increasingly complex and pressured (Ansley et al., 2018). Teachers often find themselves as observer-status subjects of debates and contestations about curriculum and student performance, and more recently there is evidence that teachers and principals are subject to increased abuse by parents at a level that is far higher than the general population (Billett et al., 2019; Buchanan, 2020; Moon & McCluskey, 2020; Riley, 2019). Education is routinely used as a political tool by various arms of politics as part of 'Culture Wars' (Burridge, 2019; Visentin & Baker, 2021) such as accounts of Australia's colonisation by Europeans as 'invasion' or 'settlement'. Other aspects of the curriculum (for example issues related to gender, sexuality and respectful relationships) are similarly contested (Keddie & Ollis, 2019; SMH, Editorial, 2 May 2021).

Research indicates that between 30 and 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Weldon, 2018), relieving schools and the profession of much institutional knowledge and experience. Many teachers remain dedicated to their calling, and more must be done to ensure that effective teachers are retained to continue to mentor and teach their students, and junior colleagues. The remainder of this chapter will address issues noted above and consider the role of teachers as changemakers in what constitutes a well-rounded and purpose-full education geared towards improving the wellbeing of all humankind while at the same time ensuring the longevity of the planet.

3 A Teaching Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century

Pre-service teachers are routinely called upon, as part of their courses, to outline their philosophy of education, such as that encountered in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968). Key Freirean concepts, which developed into the theory of Critical Pedagogy (Kincheloe, 2014), include the role of education as an emancipatory process where students engage in critical thinking, and become aware (through conscientisation) of the complexity of the interplay between power and politics, of the meaning of social and cultural capital, and develop empathic understanding and action to counter societal injustice.

This contrasts starkly with current debates about a market-driven education favouring 'workforce development' to meet a nation's economic needs (Ball, 2018; Lingard, 2010). Many believe that the current focus on the 'credentialist economic model' of education is misplaced, since education involves more than gaining qualification for work; similarly, teaching transcends training for exam success.

Teachers must also address the social, political and technological trends that influence societal and community attitudes. The importance of social media platforms in the dissemination and manipulation of information are an obvious example that impacts the work of teachers. Indeed, there are many ethical considerations related to the growing surveillance of citizens (Zuboff, 2019), all enabled by technology, and mis/used by various governments, such as the ethical ramifications of facial recognition technology now embedded in China, and increasingly countenanced elsewhere (Kirchschlaeger, 2021). This offers a further reminder of the necessity of teacher reflection on the purposes of education as a transformative process (Apple, 2010; Freire, 1968), where the teacher's role is to enable students to think critically and engage with the world beyond their own school gate and to imagine a world that seeks to actively address some of the inequities, injustices and ethical dilemmas prevalent in many nations, including Australia.

It becomes obvious when considering international problems that teaching is larger than a profession; it is a means of impacting and mobilising people and communities. The capacities for empathy and critical thinking are essential components of teaching (Burridge, 2020). They involve the ability to imagine, to see the world in a multifaceted way and to analyse cause and effect when rights are wronged. Empathy and critical thinking develop the capacity to see from another's perspective, and to understand their contexts, their experiences and their human entitlements. These are the essential skills in the preservation of social democracies. For example, students should be aware that the right to education has been enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights since its inception in 1948 and is affirmed in United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015, Goal 4) and the UN (UNICEF,

2021) Rights of the Child. Yet today, over a quarter of a billion children are denied education, and many more have inadequate schooling because of poverty, conflict, natural disasters, ideology or lack of access to schools (UNESCO, 2019), or to digital information, another strain of knowledge poverty. Even for the economic rationalists, this must surely present as a tragedy, in terms of lost human capital.

4 Empowered Teachers as Changemakers

It is in this context that the focus turns to teachers as changemakers. Teaching is a moral practice (Pring, 2001) wherein the teacher is an ‘activist professional’ (Arvanitakis, 2008; Groundwater-Smith et al., 2002; Sachs, 2000); teachers model good practice not only in the classroom, but as active, interested global citizens. Sachs based her ideas on the work of Anthony Giddens (1991, 1994), who deliberates on the ever-changing nature and complexities of life in late modernity, noting that reflexivity in structuring one’s identity is essential, and asking such questions as What to do? How to act? Who to be? forms part of this process. As the pace of change continues to quicken, these questions from last century retain their resonance today, as we each seek to respond through our personal and professional identities to societal challenges. Teachers as changemakers operate with a moral mission to better their world by educating young people about equity, social justice and rights, locally and globally. The work of teachers as changemakers is not exclusively apolitical, and teachers will tread minefields of gender, race, faith, environment, economics and political ideology. Hence, those who aspire to activism and change-making must gird themselves accordingly, with resilience and cogent truths.

Central to the purpose of education is its potential to develop and nurture critically aware, decent world citizens (Nussbaum, 2009, 2010, 2019). Nussbaum advocates the importance of education for ‘human development’, whose goal is ‘producing decent world citizens who can understand the global problems…and who have the practical competence and the motivational incentives to do something about these problems’ (2009, p. 6). We address some of these issues in the section that follows.

5 Education for Human Development

Education for human development competes with the more instrumentalist objectives of education. As Nussbaum points out:

> Education is often discussed in low-level utilitarian terms: how can we produce technically trained people who can hold onto “our” share of the global market? With the rush to profitability, values precious for the future of democracy are in danger of getting lost. The profit motive suggests to most concerned politicians that science and technology are of crucial importance. We should have no objection to good scientific and technical education. But other abilities – abilities crucial both to the health of democracy and to the creation of a

> decent world culture and a robust type of global citizenship – are at risk of getting lost in the competitive flurry. (2009, p. 6)

According to Nussbaum, global citizenry requires critical thinking and the ability to understand difference, alongside narrative imagination and empathy (Nussbaum, 2019). These are noted below in more detail:

- *Critical thinking*: The capacity for Socratic self-criticism and critical thought about one's own traditions. Critical thinking is particularly crucial in this era of rapid sound-bites and of political polarisation through increasingly strident media…We will only have a chance at an adequate dialogue across political boundaries if young citizens know how to engage in dialogue and deliberation in the first place.
- *Understanding difference*: The ability to see oneself as a member of a heterogeneous nation, and world—understanding something of the history and character of the diverse groups that inhabit it. Knowledge is no guarantee of good behaviour, but ignorance is a virtual guarantee of bad behaviour.
- *Narrative imagination*: The ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have. Learning to see another human being not as a thing but as a full person is not an automatic achievement: it must be promoted by an education that refines the ability to think about what the inner life of another may be like. (Nussbaum, 2019 online)

Nussbaum's philosophy sets out ambitious goals for education at a time when the curriculum is already overcrowded and teachers feel the pressure of having to fulfil multiple expectations in regard to their roles which often extend far beyond their expertise, discipline knowledge or training (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2020; Polesel et al., 2014).

In addition, in the current context, teacher education providers find themselves increasingly pressured to pursue funded research, rather than philanthropic pre-service international projects that can serve to illustrate the impact of teachers' work on the education of their students. Yet it is undeniable that teachers are in a position to influence the development of students, not just as learners but as human beings, as citizens and members of a broader community.

6 Twenty-First-Century Challenges for Teachers

6.1 Are the Principles of a Democratic Society in Decline?

We concede from the outset that many of these challenges were born before the turn of the current century. Nussbaum sees the development of the global citizens as an essential aspect of education for human development. However, twenty-first-century global trends related to the strength of democratic states paint a bleak picture (Kurlantzick, 2013). The Freedom House Report (2021) found that ‘the share of countries designated *Not Free* has reached its highest level since the deterioration of democracy began in 2006’. In addition, ‘fewer than a fifth of the world’s people now live in fully free countries’ (The Freedom House, 2021, online). The rise of life-term despotic leaders including Xi Jinping in China, Putin in Russia and leaders of new authoritarian states such as Erdogan in Turkey, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Orbán in Hungary and Duterte in the Philippines, coupled with the increasing use of surveillance technology such as facial recognition software to control populations, are worrisome trends that deplete civic rights and freedoms. Further, even in a country such as France, that is a beacon of democracy, a group of mostly retired members of the military sent a letter to President Macron on 21 April 2021 that raised the spectre of a possible future coup d’état (Camus, *The Guardian*, 4th May 2021). The storming of the United States Capitol in January 2021, (*Washington Post*, 2021) over the result of the US presidential elections also illustrates the rise of extremist politics that are endangering the very foundations of democracy.

6.2 Wealth and Inequality

The Coronavirus pandemic has accentuated the desire for nations to focus inwards, to retreat to national boundaries and close borders, as Australia did to its very own citizens who have been stranded overseas (Irving, SMH, 5 May 2021). The pandemic has raised fundamental questions of global equity as wealthy nations secure their access to COVID vaccines and use their economic power to assist their economy while poorer nations must bear the brunt of the pandemic with limited international assistance. Australia is perhaps the clearest example of this. According to Credit Suisse, in 2018 it was the wealthiest country in the world per capita (Sprague and Moore, Financial Review, November 2018), yet its foreign aid budget has diminished over the last decade. An OECD report noted that Australia gave 19 cents in foreign aid for every $100 of national income in 2020, whereas in 2011 that figure was 33 cents for every $100 of national income (Wade, SMH, 10 May 2021, online). This contrasts with other wealthy nations such as Norway and Sweden, which have increased their budget. Out of the 29 OECD member nations, Australia ranks amongst the least generous in its foreign aid budget.

A further threat to the principles of justice, equity and the development of a civil society is an increasing disparity in wealth distribution. Despite the pandemic, the planet’s wealthiest individuals have increased their wealth; meanwhile, those in low-income streams have suffered through extensive job losses. The Oxfam report released in January 2021, *The Inequality Virus*, highlights the extent of global inequities and indeed the inequality in wages in Australia. An Oxfam media release cited its Chief Executive, Lyn Morgan: ‘We found that it would take a nurse 259 years to earn what a top Australian CEO earns, while a CEO could earn the annual salary of a nurse in 1.3 days…This global emergency has truly laid bare the entrenched injustices of our current economic system, which only serves to deepen inequality, particularly in times of crisis' (Oxfam, 2021, online).

The report shows how the corrupted economic system is enabling a super-rich elite to amass further wealth in the midst of the worst recession since the Great Depression, while billions of people struggle to subsist (Oxfam, 2021 online). It found:

- The 1000 richest people on the planet recouped their COVID-19 losses within just nine months, while it could take more than a decade for the world's poorest people to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic.
- The world's 10 richest men have seen their combined wealth increase by half a trillion dollars since the pandemic began—more than enough to pay for a COVID-19 vaccine for everyone and to ensure no one is pushed into poverty by the pandemic.
- At the same time, the pandemic has ushered in the worst job crisis in over 90 years, with hundreds of millions of people now underemployed or out of work.

6.3 The Impact of Technology and Social Media

When discussing with teachers what has been the most significant change in teaching over their career, they routinely note the increased dependency on digital technologies, such as social media, and the resultant impact in and on classrooms. It may appear contradictory to claim that technology has also contributed to the failings in our education system. But while technology has afforded substantial benefits to education, there is a downside. Has our dependence on our gadgets stifled the capacity for creativity? So much of young people's world centres on social media, and on an obsession related to self. The capacity to share, debate and discuss differing views online including on social media platforms is an essential aspect of a democratic society. However, freedoms without responsibility have unintended consequences, particularly in enabling those who utilise social media for dishonourable ends. Political and social manipulation through social media have created alternative realities through disseminating fake news. Does it follow that our education systems have failed? If this is the case—how can they be remediated? Perhaps it is the recent graduates of our education system on whose shoulders it will fall to insist on reform. Arguably, the need for teachers to be changemakers is more necessary now than ever. A key role of teachers as changemakers is to instil in students the value of critical thinking, so that they can analyse and assess evidence to make valid decisions about their future and to build a sustainable future for the planet.

6.4 The Climate Crisis

Another major challenge of the current age is the capacity to deal with environmental degradation as economic imperatives override the need to protect our eco-systems, contributing to rising global temperatures because of climate change and the reluctance of governments such as Australia's to move towards sustainable resources rather than fossil fuels. International agencies and leading scientists continually provide evidence of the impact of coal and gas on the future of the planet as noted by the Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), Fatih Birol: 'Rich countries such as Australia have an obligation to reach net zero emissions earlier than 2050 but fears time is running out to save the planet by ditching coal and other fossil fuels' (cited in Shields, SMH, 18th May, 2021). The 'climate wars', as they have been dubbed, mirror the culture wars debates between differing political views on Australia's history. In the climate wars, the conservatives in Australia's Federal Government and the media refuse to acknowledge the impact of climate change and argue that to eliminate fossil fuels will have far-reaching economic ramifications. Yet the IEA predicts that jobs lost globally from the shift away from fossil fuels and the rise of technology will be recouped through the greener economy.

Given these circumstances, how are teachers to react and act to enable the global citizens of tomorrow to address issues of self-interest and the propensity for greed, power and wealth accumulation, environmental disregard and the privilege that emerges for a minority of human beings, in a world that might otherwise accustom and acclimatise to such inequalities? How should education respond under such circumstances? Clearly, the principles of education for human development must be part of the solution. As intimated above, democracy currently is volatile and fragile. Given that democracy appears in decline in some countries around the world, is education failing to educate students about rights and freedoms? Democracy is premised on principles of equity and justice; it demands the laying aside of privilege, as does education. Governments and educational policymakers need to act in partnership to enable a more equitable distribution of privilege. Hereunder we illustrate some examples of positive action in seeking to implement the principles of education for human development.

7 Examples of Projects that Exemplify the Role of Teachers as Agents of Change

The challenges noted above paint a bleak picture of the capacity for education to implement positive change in the crises that confront us. Yet there is scope for optimism that change is possible. In schools, there are numerous examples of whole-school projects that seek to connect students across the globe. These projects reflect the focus in The Australian Curriculum on global education particularly within their General Capabilities and Cross Curriculum Priorities (Australian Assessment and

Reporting Authority, online) and the Global Education Project website (Global Education, online), despite its lack of government funding is still available for teachers to find useful resources for schools, though they should be mindful that some maybe dated in terms of statistics and use of technology. The United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) is one organisation that supports this process and there are philanthropic organisations who assist schools with fundraising for projects in many of the world's poor nations.

Universities also have student exchange projects and overseas internships as part of their training. The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) teacher education programme has conducted overseas practicum experiences to countries such as Indonesia, Nepal, Bhutan, Samoa and other nations in the Asia–Pacific region that are designed to expand our pre-service teachers' understanding of teachers' work in countries where access to educational resources and technology is more limited.

The authors' own experience with the impact of the international practicum programme illustrates that it is an excellent way to introduce young teachers to a world beyond their own privilege and to allow them to understand the importance of education as a way out of disadvantage.

7.1 Rising Student Activism

Increasingly, there is evidence that young people are engaging with global issues through their own activism. One notable example is the School Strike for Climate, or the Fridays For Future (FFF) movement which commenced as a result of Greta Thunberg's protest in August 2018 outside the Swedish Parliament (Curnow, 2019). The school climate strikes gained international momentum with over 150 countries participating in September 2019. These strikes have continued each year. In May 2021, School Strike for Climate protests took place in every capital city in Australia as well as over 50 regional towns (SBS News, 21 May 2021, online). Youth activism organisations are on the increase, further examples include the Global Citizen website that documents youth activism and supports programmes that engage in issues for the future of the world (https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/au/) and Youth Time (https://youth-time.eu/) a web platform for young people run by young people which enables young people from around the globe to contribute stories, to apply for scholarships and to engage in discussions on pertinent global issues that are relevant to their futures.

Many teachers and teachers' unions have lent their support to the actions of these young people to express their democratic right to protest. Teachers have the responsibility to discuss these issues with their students not just in Science-based subjects, but in all subjects, to enable students to examine and analyse the data and the political, economic and social arguments associated with these issues.

The images below were taken by one of the authors at the School Strike for Climate in New York on 25 September 2019 and on 21 May 2021 in Perth, Western Australia (Figs. 1, 2 and 3).

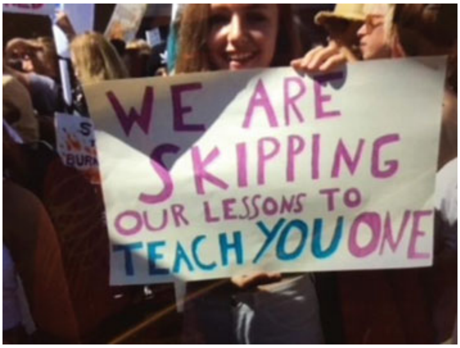
WE ARE
SKIPPING
OUR LESSONS TO
TEACH YOU ONE

Fig. 1 School strike for climate New York, 2019

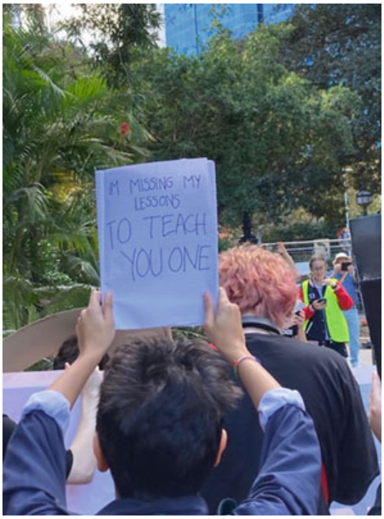
IM MISSING MY
LESSONS
TO TEACH
YOU ONE

Fig. 2 School strike for climate Perth 2021

New York, 2019 Perth, Western Australia

7.2 Refugee Learning Centres in Indonesia: A Case Study of the Work of Teachers as Changemakers from the Perspective of One of the Authors

We now present a case study of refugee schools in Indonesia, from the perspective of one of the authors involved in the project, of teachers who either consciously or unconsciously act as agents of change. The world is experiencing the most severe

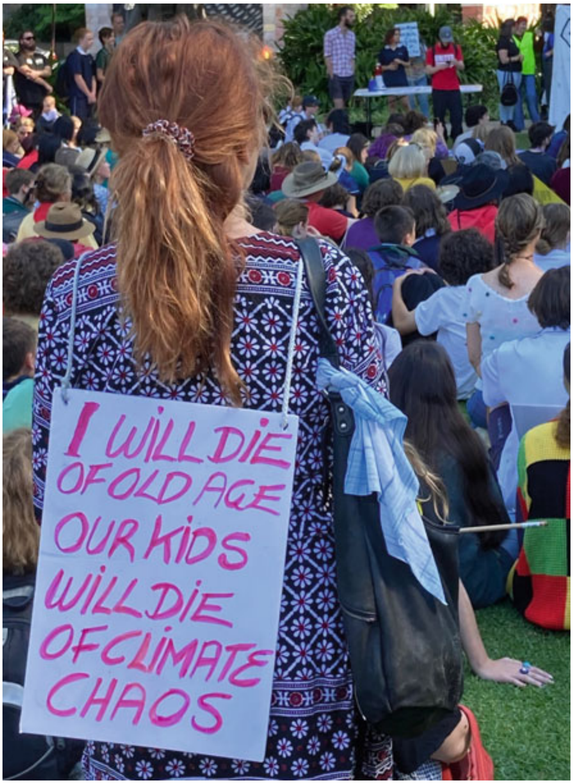

Fig. 3 School strike for climate Perth 2021

refugee crisis since the Second World War as result of conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, Afghanistan and Myanmar. Indonesia has historically been a transit country for refugees en route to countries such as Australia, the USA or Canada. The Indonesian Government is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR, n.d.). It does not seek to deport asylum seekers, although their rights are limited in terms of work and education. Due to ever-tightening controls on refugees arriving by boat in Australia and as a result of the current COVID pandemic, the time spent in transit in Indonesia awaiting resettlement has extended to many years, and for some, decades. This means that children are forfeiting an education as they cannot attend Indonesian schools.

In response to these long delays, refugee communities in Indonesia have established their own learning centres. The first learning centre, the Cisarua Refugee Learning Centre (CRLC) opened in August 2014 in Cisarua, Bogor approximately 70 km south of Jakarta. There are over 13,000 refugees living in Indonesia (UNHCR, 2020) of whom 3000 live in and around Cisarua. Most are Hazara, a minority ethnic group from Afghanistan and Pakistan, although there are also smaller numbers from Iraq, Iran, Sudan and Sri Lanka. Initially, refugees were afraid to start their own organisations fearing it could jeopardise their tentative residency in Indonesia and their refugee status with the UNHCR, but they persisted, and the Indonesian authorities appear to take a non-interventionist approach to their endeavours.

Currently, over 10 refugee learning centres operate in West Java. They are funded through overseas crowdfunding donations as well as overseas family support of individual refugee families. Each learning centre operates independently, and most follow a similar model using crowdfunding to pay rent for the building, and calling for volunteer teachers and administrators from the community. All teachers and management are refugees themselves; most have neither qualifications nor experience in teaching, and most have less than twelve years of schooling themselves. Teachers are principally selected on the basis of their English language skills and willingness to volunteer for the role.

Through various educational and refugee activist connections, a small team of academics, teacher educators and schoolteachers from the University of Technology Sydney has worked with these refugee learning centres from 2016 to assist them with their teacher training. One of the authors has been part of this team. In the initial visit in 2016 to several of these refugee learning centres the team's expectations were surpassed by what they encountered. Despite the challenges of small classrooms, limited resources and technology, the refugee learning centres were hubs of activity, enabling connections and support for their students and their families as well as the teachers. Indeed, it was obvious that all the families that are involved in the Centres were very proud of their work. Since then, the team from UTS has visited these refugee learning centres in Bogor Indonesia at least once per year, though COVID-19 has prevented any visits beyond January 2020. Now they connect with the schools via online conferencing.

In terms of teachers as changemakers, the teachers and academics who travel to work with these learning centres are making a difference as they seek to improve access to education for some very vulnerable, displaced communities. What is more significant to observe is the work of the volunteer teachers who have the task of teaching these young children subjects like Science, Maths, Art, Social Studies and English, not in their first language but in English and without any level of teacher education; these lay-teachers recognise their own shortcomings in this regard, and hunger for advice and leadership accordingly. They demonstrate the essence of the teacher as changemaker. Among these young teachers, there is a tacit understanding of the importance of their work and an underlying impetus to instil in their students respect for human rights and freedoms.

This may have led to the organisers of these schools ensuring that the classes are co-educational and that boys and girls are able to sit together in these small classrooms and interact with teachers of either gender. This was seen by many as a progressive move that taught the children about equality, particularly in relation to gender and the right to education. This, in turn, raised some concerns for parents, unaccustomed to having such issues discussed with children. Bringing parents together for informal chats about adolescent behaviours was an important way to build connections and broaden their understanding of the social changes occurring in this new environment. Through classroom observations, it became evident that while the teacher may not have directly spoken about human rights in the class activity, students often

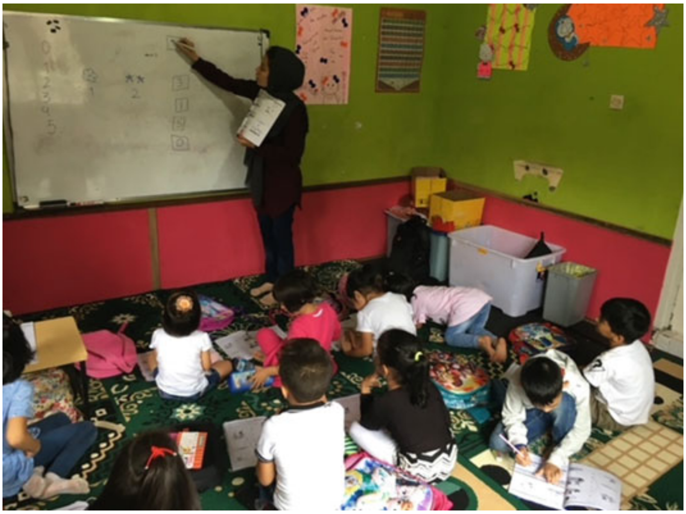

Fig. 4 Refugee volunteer teacher at work

expressed themselves through images and prose that depicted their stories of trauma and persecution and their desire for freedom (Fig. 4).

A poignant drawing by a primary student seen during the last visit illustrates how the teachers and students are engaging with world events and their sense of empathy for global tragedies (Fig. 5).

This work illustrates the impact of classroom discussions on the bushfires in Australia in what has become known as the Black Summer of 2019–2020 and the mass shootings in the United States during 2019.

In the upper primary and secondary years, some teachers addressed the issue of rights more specifically, using posters taken from curriculum resources provided by overseas visitors.

This image below, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is taken from the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) resources 'Rights Ed' resources to assist teachers with the Australian History curriculum, which has a focus on teaching about human rights (Fig. 6).

The above poster was displayed in several of the refugee learning centres. It is particularly apt as it lists the various rights enshrined in the United Nations UDHR and it also has images which are inclusive of the diversity of global citizens. However, one comment from a teacher about the UDHR sparked a conversation amongst the teachers about the international rhetoric of human rights and the reality for refugees. The comment from the refugee teacher related to the relevance of such a treaty for them. It was merely a token, as their rights had not been realised, they were in limbo, with no education and few future prospects. It illustrated to the author how teachers can underscore the importance of these documents in class, but how important it is to also see these UN Declarations from the perspectives of those who have the

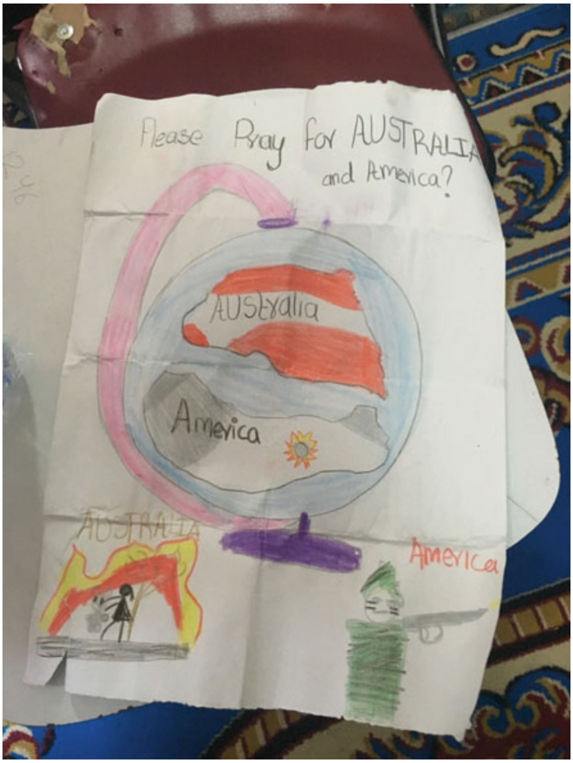

Fig. 5 Student work exploring bushfires and school shootings

lived experience of being a refugee—those who depend on such edicts the most. This reality did not deter them from their work as a teacher; their level of determination and resilience is part of the strong character of someone who can make change in society.

8 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have set out to illustrate the critical work of teachers in their role as agents of change for a better world for their students. There is no doubt that the world that has been handed down to the younger generations by their elders has many challenges, and perhaps young people are less trustworthy of their elders to remedy the situation. Accordingly, it may not be easy for teachers and other elders to build confidence among their charges (Buchanan, 2021). However, this is not an insurmountable challenge, and teachers have the skills to build trust amongst their students.

Increasingly, a teacher's role comes with many responsibilities. Education policy-makers and society in general expect that it is the role of teachers to educate children

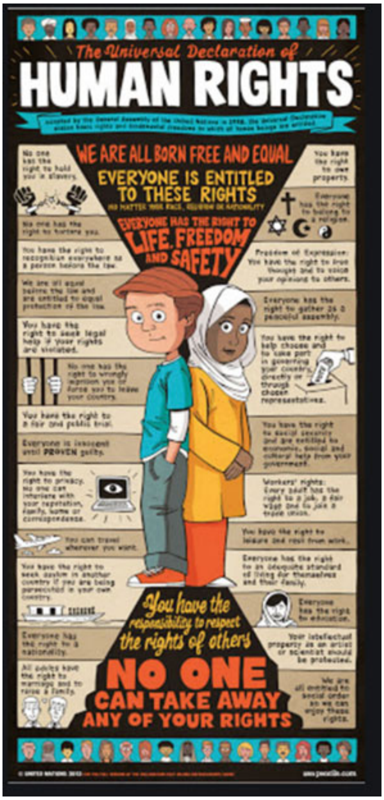
The Universal Declaration of
HUMAN RIGHTS
WE ARE ALL BORN FREE AND EQUAL
EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO THESE RIGHTS
EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE, FREEDOM AND SAFETY
You have the responsibility to respect the rights of others
NO ONE CAN TAKE AWAY ANY OF YOUR RIGHTS

Fig. 6 AHRC Poster. ARTWORK (*Source* © GAVIN AUNG THAN 2012–2022. WWW.AUNGTHAN.COM. Used with permission)

about key societal issues. This should not and cannot be the teacher's sole responsibility. Partnerships in teachers' work are essential including those with parents, students, and, in particular, those responsible for educational organisation—the bureaucrats and politicians.

Through our discussion of teachers as changemakers, as agents of change for good, we have highlighted some of the key ingredients of a good education. Through this, we have invoked the Nussbaum model of education for human development, a model that seeks to overturn existing perspectives of the purpose of education as a mere generator of job-fillers. Education for human development is purposed to build pedagogies of hope, trust, criticality, empathy and collaboration as the essential learnings of global citizens. One means to achieve the above might be to invest in education for the future, ensuring that teachers are provided with the capacity to engage with global issues, and to create structural and cultural environments in which these qualities might thrive, for teachers and students alike (Burridge, 2020). Current educational management in schools, universities and government institutions is at times the antithesis of this (Buchanan, 2020; Varadharajan, et al, 2019). Schooling must have supportive frameworks to allow teachers to maximise their capabilities in the classroom to upskill and embolden young people to be active and creative citizens to tackle the challenges of tomorrow.

Many 'educational blueprint' documents offer glowing hope for the future of learning and teaching. Examples in Australia include the Mparntwe Declaration (Education Services Australia, 2019). The first of the Declaration's two goals declares that 'the Australian education system promotes excellence and equity' (p. 6). The second is as follows: 'All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community' (p. 6). That means not only teachers but governments who control educational policy and funding, need to hold such documents to their word by providing much-needed investment in education to ensure our teachers can be changemakers that instil in our students the inherent skills, understandings and values of an active and committed global citizenry underpinned by the principles of education for human development as a priority.

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Teaching for Democracy

Cameron Paterson and Meredith Gavrin

Abstract In this chapter, Cameron Paterson brings his experience as a teacher, director of learning, and advocate for Harvard's Project Zero teaching approaches. Project Zero is globally renowned for expertise in thinking, understanding, and creativity. Meredith Gavrin is a teacher and school founder and leader, with particular expertise in Facing History and Ourselves, an organisation that uses lessons of history to challenge teachers and students to stand up to bigotry and hate. Professional learning in our multiplicitous world is considered alongside ways to bring this world into the classroom and empower our students as young participatory citizens and activists, through the practice of history studies. Just as this volume raises teacher voice alongside and in concert with academic voices, the next frontier is clearly student voice and empowerment, and this chapter explores how this might be cultivated and brought into stark reality.

1 The Role and Complexity of Schooling

A flourishing democracy requires an educated populace, able to think critically. Under the onslaught of neoliberalism and privatisation, schooling remains one of our few surviving democratic institutions. Schools—and education as a whole—can potentially transform the course that a nation takes. Public schooling, in particular, provides access to all and brings students together across demographics and class. A democracy cannot thrive without empowering schools to keep democratic values at the centre. Our key argument is that teachers' professional freedom and creativity are essential to democracy's survival. This includes teachers' abilities to make informed, independent decisions for their own classrooms based on their observations and understanding of their students. While other institutions leach trust, schools

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remain trusted pillars of the community; yet schools are increasingly threatened by controlling bureaucracies and driven by performative measures.

The danger facing democratic societies at the moment is that when people stop listening to diverse opinions, they stop learning. Social media and digital communication have made us poor listeners and learners. Jarring certainty is favoured over nuanced debate. People should not be frightened of complexity; they should be frightened of shortcuts. Society has to find ways to get past the notion of fixed positions, of Left and Right, of traditional Western binaries, and instead embrace diversity of opinion.

Education is a space to hold complex and different points of view. Unfortunately, fixed positions and strict boundaries are increasingly the dominant forces in schools, where teachers are often unable—or *feel* unable—to set the agenda. The humanity and complexity of teaching are being threatened by political, commercial, and populist forces. Teachers are hindered by short-sighted education policies, commercialisation, bureaucratisation, increasing workloads, and mechanistic accountabilities. Adrian Piccoli, former NSW Minister for Education and Director of the Gonski Institute for Education, argues that administrative burden is the "number one problem" for teachers, stating, "they rightly complain that it distracts them from the main game of teaching" (Drysdale et al., 2019).

It has become harder to exercise pedagogical freedom. It has been subsumed by uniformity as powerful bureaucracies impose deadening regulations. While teachers have the best vantage point across the education system, they are losing control of professional decisions. The tacit knowledge and experience of teachers are being devalued. Tacit knowledge is that delicate nuance that is imperceptible to the untrained eye. Even the best teachers find it hard to define. Carl Hendrick (2016) wrote that, "…directly experiencing the many failures and hard-won successes of teaching children (as opposed to adults) in the classroom and being a stable part of their lives and a wider school community over many years is a rare form of knowledge that's too often undervalued." High-quality teaching incorporates teachers' daily observations about their own students rather than following rigidly pre-planned or scripted lessons.

Bell hooks (1994) urged teachers to consider "Education as the practice of freedom." This entails dialogue and action about messy topics, listening to and promoting the voices of marginalised people, understanding implicit bias, incorporating restorative justice, and building classrooms around collective learning and trust. How do schools encourage and care about student autonomy while promoting academic challenge at the same time?

Teachers' role at the centre of educational decision-making should go beyond the classroom. Currently, teacher voice is largely absent in policy revision, on advisory boards, and on media panels. The media often presents polarising perspectives of the teaching profession. It is not unusual to turn the TV on in the evening and see commentators from all walks of life debating and dissecting teaching as a profession. Many adults feel empowered to weigh in with opinions about schooling simply on the basis of having once attended school themselves. Teacher voices are rarely sought, except perhaps as sensationalised sound bites. Occasionally, a celebrity teacher might be trundled out to speak for teachers, with teachers watching at home uncertain how the celebrity became elected to speak for the profession.

2 Alternative Forms of Professional Learning

Two significant shifts can place democratic ideals back at the centre of schooling: first, teachers must have the independence and agency to make informed decisions based on their classroom observations and their knowledge of their students; second, they must be able to put critical thinking at the centre of the curriculum. In short, teachers must be able to think critically in order to cultivate the critical thinkers our democracies need.

While en masse "spray and pray" whole-staff professional development can pretend to reach all staff, it does little for teacher agency. In modern accountability regimes, it is hard to identify an aspect of teacher work that is not subject to evaluation and accountability. Teacher appraisal and performance management tend to push teacher learning towards collective compliance, rather than individual growth. Coaching is one example of a professional learning approach that supports teacher agency (Andrews & Munro, 2019). It refines practice and respects the experience of teachers. It is not about installing a system or training teachers; it respects the science of learning and, more importantly, the artistry of teaching. It promotes a culture of trust—instead of an audit and micromanagement culture. At its best, it is a learning dialogue. A coach helps to facilitate teacher learning through attentive, active listening, classroom observations, and pressing for suitable challenge.

Coaching builds agency and supports professionalism, trust, and respect. It provides direction for novice teachers and develops the practice of experienced teachers. Moreover, when schools create opportunities for more experienced teachers to coach novice teachers; experienced teachers cite these opportunities as central to their own growth, and beginning teachers say they learn not only teaching strategies, but also the nuances of their school's culture and their students' needs from their more experienced colleagues. Among seven policy recommendations that Linda Darling-Hammond and her colleagues make in their 2017 report "Effective Teacher Professional Development" is the conclusion that "State and district administrators could identify and develop expert teachers as mentors and coaches to support learning in their particular area(s) of expertise for other educators" in order to create effective, results-oriented, high-impact learning opportunities for teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Developing a community in which deep discussions about teaching and learning are an essential part of teacher practice provides the basis for cultivating students' thinking and learning. Learning is a social enterprise. Collaborative structures help to decrease teacher isolation, codify and share successful teaching practices, increase staff morale, and open the door to experimentation and increased collective efficacy. High levels of collaboration are likely to exist when the leadership marks it as a priority, when common time and physical space are set aside for collaboration, and when teaching and learning are seen as a team responsibility, rather than an individual responsibility. The movement from "*me*" or "*I*" to "*us*" or "*we*" requires frequent teacher interactions which can be achieved through common planning time, team-teaching, and coaching and mentoring. This move to develop a collaborative learning culture is central to inculcating more democratic ideals within schools.

If teachers are supported to grow, question, and reflect, then they will generate the same environments for their students. A large number of dialogue-based protocols (such as those provided by the School Reform Initiative) exist to facilitate teacher collaboration, the deprivatisation of practice, provide useful feedback, focus on teaching and learning, and build shared norms and values. Over time, these protocols become less like recipes and more like purposeful tools used in service of a group's learning goals. Protocols create different educational conversations, geared towards collaboration and shared values; the starting point for the development of a democracy.

3 Shifting the Focus in the Classroom

In 2018, *Facing History and Ourselves* held a global summit exploring the future of democracy and education (Facing History, 2018). Some of Cameron's Year 9 students were invited to contribute their thoughts. Here are some of their responses:

- *"Democracy is freedom of speech and the right to show your opinions."*
- *"A good citizen of democracy has the ability to accept that not everything will go your way."*
- *"I don't know the meaning of the word 'democracy.'"*
- *"Our teachers don't help us live in a democracy. We don't have one at school. It's a dictatorship."*
- *"Our teachers protect us too much, too much spoon-feeding."*

The organisation *Facing History and Ourselves* provides teachers with materials, methods, and training to engage students in middle and upper grades in complex analysis of historical case studies in order to examine injustice, inequity, and prejudice both in the past and in the present. In a Facing History classroom, student-centred teaching methods include approaches like a "barometer activity," in which students place themselves along a spectrum of ideas and responses to a prompt and engage in extended discussion of their reasoning, and "gallery walks," in which students respond, both in writing and in discussion, to a range of primary source documents to explore the complexity of a historical moment rather than accepting at face value a textbook's interpretation. The organisation's approach has been recognised by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning and the United States Department of Education—among others—for their consistent, documented impact on students' analytical skills, historical understanding, civic participation, and empathy. Moreover, the organisation's pedagogy has a measurable impact on teacher efficacy as well: a 2014 study of teachers who received professional development and ongoing support in Facing History's methodology found that those teachers, "showed significantly greater self-efficacy in all eight assessed domains, more positive perceptions of professional support, satisfaction and growth, and greater personal accomplishment" (Barr et al., 2015).

Students who take *Facing History* classes in high school are aware and reflective about the impact the classes have on their worldview. In a recent interview for a short film, one student explained, "When you study history you might be learning the facts, learning dates, but when you face history, you're absorbing what it meant for the people who experience them and applying it to your own life when you go forward and have to make choices and make decisions." Another extends that sentiment to include their role in society: "What we do right now is we're making history, everything we're doing, and we need to make sure that we're making the right choices for the betterment of our country and for ourselves." Finally, a third student adds the concept of obligation: "I definitely feel more responsible to do something for my community, being a part of Facing History."

School should be about learning, not just the completion of work. Learning happens when students engage with ideas and when they ask questions; listening and questioning are the basis for positive classroom interactions. Engaging students in active discussion increases engagement and helps form community, essential elements of a modern democracy. Discussions in *Facing History* classrooms build students' sense of connection and community. When students were asked to explain their evolving perspectives on diversity, one answered, "I feel I have become way more considerate of what people say and being respectful of what they believe in;" another explained, "We definitely acknowledge and support other people's opinions and differences, and that's something that we celebrate here."

4 What a Democratic Classroom Might Look Like

Signs that students are owning the classroom include hands-up not being the norm, teachers regularly soliciting feedback from students, and using protocols for discussions. The Reggio Emilia approach advocates that "listening must be the basis of the learning relationship that teachers seek to form with students" (Ritchhart et al., 2011, p. 37). Thinking is a social endeavour. Students learn from the people around them and their engagement with them. It is deeply important that learners are able to converse with others, play with ideas, and collectively create knowledge.

The classroom furniture set up indicates how the class is expected to interact. Is it a student-owned democratic space or a reflection of teacher authoritarianism? What is on the wall models what the teacher wants to highlight. When students sit in rows of desks facing the front of the room, learning often entails getting and storing information; students are seen as passive vessels to be filled. When learning is seen as a dynamic, collective, more democratic endeavour then sitting in rows becomes obsolete. Flexible, portable furniture can make the classroom space more responsive.

Instead of seeing children as young, future citizens, they can be viewed as citizens now, capable of making meaningful contributions to their communities. Often in schools, children are viewed through a deficit lens, as problems in need of fixing, rather than as bringing resources and potential. *Project Zero's 'Children Are Citizens'* project provides a wonderful example of democratic ideals in action. It is grounded in the belief that children are not just future citizens but are citizens here and now, with the right to express their views and contribute to civic and cultural life. Teachers in Washington D.C. helped children research places that interested them, including the Metro, monuments, museums, Union Station, natural spaces, public sculptures, and playgrounds. The children spoke, wrote, and sketched their ideas, and then shared their work across schools. When children start their schooling with their thinking, feeling, and acting being supported in groups, it is likely that they will grow up to participate in and practice democracy as informed and caring citizens.

5 Student Voice

Student voice is a critical component of democratic approaches in schools. Pedro Noguera (2007) wrote about, "…ways to include students, on a regular basis, in discussions about their school experiences. Such discussions can occur in formal settings, such as on established committees or decision-making bodies, and they can occur informally at classroom level. The main thing is that they occur regularly and that adults respond respectfully to what they hear." Effective student voice grows students' responsibility for their learning and helps teachers to gain new insights that help refine teaching programmes, pedagogy, and assessments, and inform future learning. At one school, student representatives are nominated by their peers to attend Heads of Department meetings, as equals with the teachers. They complete the same readings as the teaching staff, contribute to discussions and decisions, and find that their views are actively sought and promoted by the teachers.

Empowered teachers can also empower their students. An emphasis on critical thinking and more independent, informed decision-making for students better equips young people to engage thoughtfully and actively in democracy as adults. One of the challenges of teacher-driven, rote instruction is that students become dependent on teacher directives. High-achieving students can also show evidence of difficulty when faced with open-ended problem-solving across disciplines. Even the business sector recognises that problem-solving is about critical thinking skills. "Standardized, rote learning that teaches to a test is exactly the type of education our children don't need in this world that is plagued by systemic, pervasive and confounding global challenges. Today's education system does not focus enough on teaching children to solve real world problems and is not interdisciplinary, nor collaborative enough in its approach" (Jain, 2013).

Conversely, the work of Grant Wiggins and Authentic Education emphasises the importance of teaching towards the goal of "transfer"—enabling students to take all of their intellectual skills and tools and to know, independently, which tools apply best in novel situations. Wiggins wrote often of the importance of equipping students with the skill set to solve problems we don't yet know about that they will encounter in the future. To do so, students have to be required to think through open-ended challenges rather than being instructed in which steps to take and which tools to use: in Wiggins' words, "have learners practice judgment, not just skill. Transfer is about judging which skill and knowledge to use when. Transfer is thus not about plugging in a 'skill' but 'judgment' - smart strategy - in the use of a repertoire of skills" (Wiggins, 2010).

Complex experiments, public presentations, and examining primary documents are not just for university learning and experts. When children are provided with developmentally appropriate opportunities to do the work instead of just learning about it, they 'play the whole game' (Perkins, 2010). Too often, students find themselves labouring over something because it is supposed to be important in the future. This 'learning for later' does not assist engagement or knowledge recall. When students play the whole game, the aim is to build learning out of meaningful and worthwhile experiences. Engagement and authenticity are the keys to learning. Students want to know about things that have relevance in their immediate lives.

6 Students Meeting the World Outside School

One model of student engagement, common in schools in the Facing History Partner Schools Network, is to require students to complete action projects of their own design, based on their in-depth studies of social issues. Often known as "social action projects," these endeavours require students to apply their academic skills to authentic problems. Rather than emphasising delivery of content, this project-based approach develops learners' problem-solving skills; to be successful, students must demonstrate their understanding of societal issues, statistical information, proposed and real legislation, complex and competing perspectives, and often, the work of their own communities. In many versions of these projects, students design and execute their own community-based solutions to the problems they've identified and studied. Powerfully, research shows that the impact of this work is not only in students' engagement, but the authentic work also increases students' academic achievement (El-Amin et al., 2017).

Many of our educational tensions are well known and globally shared: top-down punitive accountability, a climate of competition, increasing reliance on numeric data, the negative effects of over-testing, and an epidemic of anxiety (Netolicky et al., 2019). Students annually go through the rite of passage of cramming syllabus dot points, rote learning essays, and then burning their study notes. Shovelling a mass of content into students and drilling them to answer exam-style questions seems rather pointless in today's fluid, connected world. If parents demand a teacher at the front of a class presenting a conventional lesson, it is difficult to nurture a model that promotes active, engaged, passionate learning.

Schools are largely driven by performative measures. The inspiring Melbourne Declaration and the more recent Alice Spring (Mparntwe) declaration have been overshadowed by the dominance of the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). In the recent Geoff Masters' NSW curriculum review and the Mwparntwe declaration, there were widespread calls for a reduction in content coverage and more focus on creativity, problem-solving, flexibility, collaboration, and global awareness. All too often educators have witnessed well intended curriculum reviews watered down by political realities, losing the original intent and resulting in a mass of content to cover in order to keep all constituents happy.

Education is surrounded by the reverberating business of corporate investment. External experts are parachuted to deliver simple answers to complex educational questions. Large-scale assessment, obsession with quantifying learning, and new models of governance and technological innovation, are pervasive. Schools and teachers will soon find themselves 'baked in' to particular technology platforms. Moore warns that, "It will be a brave parent who chooses to opt out of a data-driven system, if by opting out it means their child has less chance of gaining entry to the college of their choice, or of entering the career they aspire to" (Moore, 211).

As a result of external political pressures, schools have become addicted to quantitative data and this limits the end product. Striving to achieve a secure clinical relationship between inputs and outputs is fraught with challenges. Teacher colleague Deb Netolicky often writes, "Teaching should not be a profession without accountabilities, but education is not an algorithm" (2019, p. 16). Assessment is a conversation, not a number. Much research indicates that whenever a mark or grade is used alongside a narrative comment, the written feedback is frequently ignored. Dylan Wiliam (2016) refers to the deadening effect of ego-related feedback (comparison with peers) versus task-related feedback (focusing on the learning). Effective feedback causes thinking. When there is a culture of 'visible listening' and provocative or insightful student quotes are recorded and reflected back around the classroom, students begin to understand that what they think is valued. Qualitative forms of sharing evidence like student work, photos, and video are powerful ways to provide a complete picture of student learning.

7 The Joys and Artistry of Teaching

Teaching is an extraordinarily rewarding career. Every day is exciting. One of the allures is that there are no absolutes, no clear-cut answers. Over time and with experience, a teacher grows mastery in integrating the multiple factors that she should consider in her classroom: curricular goals; individual student needs; students' stage of development; interpersonal interactions in the classroom; external events and circumstances that arise during the school year. Skilled teachers incorporate information they gather by observation; every student interaction and all student work provide formative information they consider as they plan next steps, lessons and individual interventions. At a Project Zero Sydney Network conference in 2019, Tina Blythe from Project Zero stated, “Teaching is fundamentally a creative act. The work we do with our students is our art and there is no one who can tell us how to make that art.” Teaching is an art, not a delivery system.

A first-class education system is imperative for democracy. Deborah Meier, MacArthur Fellow and educator for more than fifty years, wrote, “It’s time for us to ‘measure’ schools by the values we believe in for public life in general, and to ‘measure’ our students, then, by the long-term impact they will have on our larger society and the vitality of our democracy” (Meier, 2012). Schools play a central role in any robust democracy. This needs to be relentlessly reiterated amidst the noise of high-velocity capitalism. Democracy only works when citizens are aware of their own role in protecting democratic principles. Adult citizens who are well-informed, thoughtful, and committed to learning from one another through civil discourse must acquire those qualities and skills throughout their education.

Schools are crucial in the creation of a highly educated and knowledgeable population. For democracy to flourish, a well-informed and critical thinking citizenry must flourish as well. To that end, teachers must be given the opportunities to learn and to lead by example throughout their daily work. Teaching is a creative, political, human act. Democracy can’t be automated.

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Democracy Starts in the Classroom

Jemina Kolber

Abstract The narrowing of teacher work has occurred across many fronts. This chapter examines the ways that literacy, and a focus on it and numeracy, has changed expectations of teachers. The datafication that supports this focus on literacy and numeracy has spawned an overt focus on a battery of standardised tests. This chapter presents an alternative vision to this instrumentalised approach to teaching and learning that recognises the important of teacher agency, and places that within the context of a data-rich schooling environment. By reconceptualising the nature of teaching, and the purpose of schooling, it is possible to act as both a democratic teacher, and appease the expectations of a data-centric agenda. One way of doing so is by developing greater fluency with dialogic approaches to education. As an example, one way of doing this is via the methodology of the 'socratic circle'. This approach is outlined, with guidance on its origins, its aims and the way that educators can apply it to a range of learning settings. A further discussion explains the atmosphere intended to be achieved, the learning learning outcomes and protocols to support student development via this approach. Socratic circles hold great promise for both teachers as it allows them to practice democratic ways of being, and also for students, as a mechanism to experience and learn the possibilities of democratic collaboration within their classroom.

1 Introduction

Democracy in education is critical for the sake of teachers, but also for the sake of a vibrant and healthy democratic society. Yet it is often overlooked within the education system. Even the most basic requirement of democracy—representation—is missing for teachers representation at many levels of policy and decision-making, including

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Anyone interested in pursuing the Socratic circle approach within their own classroom is welcome to contact me for support and resources.

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in organisations like the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). And teachers also struggle to provide opportunities for their students to engage in democratic processes in their classrooms, too, for many reasons, including a lack of time, knowledge and an increasingly demanding agenda from policy-makers. These two facets are related: as active educators, we ought to practise a little of what we preach, creating the spaces we would like to inhabit within our own classrooms. This chapter discusses the ways in which I strive to make my classroom a more democratic space through the use of a teaching method called ‘Socratic circles’. I will begin by outlining the context within which I work, at the system, state and classroom level, avoiding discussion of my school site, which remains largely ordinary. The hope with this approach is that I will be able to establish both the context and the ways that my teaching approach is a response to my context and also my recognition of those elements most lacking in that environment. This is because I believe that the approach of proposing teaching strategies without exploring context, or personal values benefits no one, as there is no such thing as ‘one size fits all’ in education (as much as we would love it to!) As a result, I will outline my own beliefs about pedagogy and the context that informs this approach, so that practitioners and policy-makers may consider whether these ideas are relevant, or practicable within their own practice. Once this has been established, I will outline practical approaches to implementing this teaching method, before finally concluding with ways that this method could be used and the value it has for empowering teachers and students.

2 The Victorian Teaching Context: NAPLAN, VCE and Accountability

I teach within the state of Victoria (our car number plates bear the moniker: ‘the education state’, highlighting the state government’s commitment to education—although perhaps not to education workers) as part of the Department of Education and Training in an inner-city, public, Government secondary school. At the system level, more broadly, I’m a member of the ‘accountability generation’ (Heffernan, 2018), which means that I began my career amid the NAPLAN (National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy) paradigm; many of my actions have been shaped and informed by this fact. These are standardized tests in Literacy and Numeracy that all Australian students undertake every two years. The results are used to rank schools against each over via a publically available website. I teach towards the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), which involves a heavily weighted focus on assessment via examination to calculate a score towards an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR).

I relate to Rebecca Cody, an Australian school leader, who used the metaphor of riding two wild horses to describe my experiences in education: in this metaphor, one horse is my commitment to holistic education (i.e. Educating the whole child) and the other horse is the demand of rigorous academic achievement (Cody, 2018,

p. 198). Within my literacy middle leadership roles I am most like a spy (Grice, 2019), working between the leadership team, the teaching staff and in the grey space between these two 'wild horses' within the broader systemic culture. The focus on competitive educational data and the chasing of success via international rankings began with the Gillard Government setting ambitious—and unlikely educational targets (Gorur & Wu, 2015; Thomson, 2019) and has now been renewed and revived by Education Minister, Alan Tudge (Hare, 2021). Gillard's goal was for Australia 'to be ranked as a top-five country in reading, mathematics and science by 2025' (Gorur & Wu, 2015; Thomson, 2019). In contrast, Tudge merely claimed that he is setting a goal for 'Australia to again being among the top group of nations in school education performance' (Hare, 2021).

While these are high level statements by federal politicians, they nevertheless lead to expectations about my work. This takes the form of a systemic focus on improving students' literacy and numeracy as part of a broader 'back to basics' narrative (Parkin, 1984). Within this narrative, there is little discussion of science literacy, despite it being tested within PISA (Thomson et al., 2019) which speaks to the confusing policy and practice considerations present. Indeed, recent successes of Australian students in Mathematics (Baker & Chrysanthos, 2020) on this test have done little to tamp down this back-to-basics narrative, showing that the focus is lesson student achievement, and more about scapegoating and 'gaslighting' teachers, as part of a broader disempowerment agenda.

The underlying factor in all discussions about literacy, pedagogy and English within Victoria is that they are heavily influenced by the NAPLAN test and the VCE examinations. Importantly, the VCE English examination consists of three hours of writing and is assessed via extensive human marking (McGaw, Louden & Wyatt-Smith, 2020). By contrast, the NAPLAN writing test is something that is marked to a rubric and has been much derided in the media for its limited scope and understanding of what good writing is (Kolber & McKnight, 2020). The VCE English examination structure is written language-centric, with oral presentations being performed only twice in the final two years of schooling. Students are not assessed on their listening skills at all, unlike, by contrast, the EAL (English as an Additional Language) curriculum. This makes for surprising and interesting commentary about what is important to our education system and final assessment policy.

3 The Influence of COVID-19

As a response to COVID-19, Victoria was placed in the strictest lockdowns in Australia. This involved four separate phases of remote, emergency online delivery of instruction at the secondary level. This is crucial context for me, as my role as a Literacy Improvement Teacher within the state-wide Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy initiative (MYLNS) (DET, 2019b) is where I aim to address the inequity that is prevalent within our system, and because these phases of modified instruction further marginalised the groups that I work with most closely (Eacott et al., 2020).

These students are assigned to me based on the fact that they are below the national minimum standard in reading, but are in actuality drawn from a range of groups including, low-literacy, indigenous, disabled, disengaged and EAL students. The years that were affected by COVID have further highlighted the different approaches taken to supporting those students most 'behind' or 'underachieving'.

One approach to this has been the state's tutoring initiative (DET, 2021) that aims to redress perceived learning loss as a result of COVID-19. This is despite the fact that emerging research suggests that there has been no, or minimal, impact upon primary school students in NSW schools (albeit a shorter lockdown), running counter to this dominant fear-mongering narrative (Gore et al., 2021). Hattie (2016) suggests that an ever increasing number of non-teacher adults within schools and classrooms, as opposed to teachers, has had little positive impact on learning outcomes, suggesting that an increase in this number only serves as a distraction. I have found that while this may be true, the question of who is empowered by these processes is also important. For example, the MYLNS initiative (DET, 2019b) empowers highly skilled educators, and funds them properly to support students found wanting in their literacy outcomes across NAPLAN tests. By contrast, the post-COVID-19 recovery attempt of Tutoring demonstrates a move towards temporary, short-term contracts for teachers, for a limited time only, to support students who are feared to have suffered learning loss. This shows that programmes themselves can often represent either empowerment by recognising the value of a highly skilled teaching workforce—or they can simply add more non-teacher adults into schools in ineffective ways.

Through this programme and other, similar ones, my work as a teacher often means acting in response to the increased presence of—and demands for—large-scale testing. These demands encourage certain approaches and pedagogies, and often devalue or 'crowd out' forms of pedagogy that are more holistic, or perhaps more progressive (Spina et al, 2019, p. 43) replacing them with test-centric responses. By focusing my practice on holistic education, student-focussed approaches, I am often seen as rebellious.

4 Education and Social Justice

As a teacher, especially an English and literacy teacher, my practice of teaching is informed by my own experiences as a reader, writer, speaker and listener. For me, the process of improvement is partly one of locating inconsistencies between my beliefs and my practice.

As a middle leader (Day & Grice, 2019; Grice, 2019; Lipscombe et al., 2020), I seek to practice democratic professionalism rather than managerial professionalism (Sachs, 2001), enacting leadership that is inclusive and allows others a voice, rather than curtailing their rights for the benefit of a simplistic view of leadership.

We teach in a system, especially in secondary school, that does not teach, or value, students who think and question effectively. I have been a Year 12 teacher (English and Media) for many years of my 14 year teaching career. I, too, have fallen into the trap of thinking that due to the crowded VCE curriculum, there is not enough time to teach my students important life skills. Instead I have relied on lecturing my students in the lead up to their School Assessed Coursework (SACs) and Exams with the expectation that my students will then regurgitate the things I have told them and that will henceforth lead to a good grade. To some extent, the system does reward regurgitation of ideas and knowledge for the vast majority of students, where creativity and freedom of expression are most highly rewarded, it's often thought that not all students can reach this standard, which explains the approach of lecturing and formulaic writing in VCE (McKnight, 2020, 2021).

My work with literacy and numeracy, and my teaching more broadly, is an act of social justice; my classroom is a manifestation of social justice action and social cohesion. This means that I have a focus on class as the determining factor that instils inequity within our schools and an awareness of the systemic challenges that cause this. Despite these challenges, I nevertheless work optimistically to resolve them. A recent Monash University report (Wilkinson et al., 2018) examined social cohesion in Victorian public schools by surveying principals and assistant principals. Cyberbullying represented the top social issue identified by school leaders as negatively affecting the student community (60% of school leaders placed this in their top three issues); followed by racism (22%), mental health (20%) and poverty (20%). Rodd and Sanders (2018) notes that social class has dropped off the academic agenda for social cohesion within Australian education (p. 35) linking neoliberalism within education with a tendency towards reproducing the middle class.

The leaders, when asked about supporting social cohesion, reported that the DET funded 'Respectful Relationships' initiative was the resource or programme most commonly accessed by schools (86%), followed by 'Amplify: Empowering students through voice, agency and leadership' (76%) (DET, 2019a). I've engaged with each of these initiatives directly within my middle leadership (Day & Grice, 2019; Grice, 2019; Lipscombe, et al., 2020) and the principles of student voice present in these programmes infuse my classroom practices.

I suggest that in some small way, these forms of open discussion, informed by students' own beliefs can go some ways towards addressing racism and normalising discussions of mental health among young people—both of which have been maturely and respectfully discussed by my students. Freire (1970) places the role of education as humanisation and liberation, imbuing students with a capacity to read the world and their own place in it critically and consciously. As Rodd and Sanders (2018, p. 52) notes, 'Everything done in school—literacy and numeracy—must be connected meaningfully to the broader social context'. Therefore, I construct my classroom as a microcosm of our society and attempt to improve it by creating a place where, 'trust and openness are valued and celebrated and where all who participate in it see themselves as members of a decent and civil society' (Groundwater-Smith, 2009, p. 1). This is of course an ambitious goal, but something that is important to me personally and professionally. It is also a particularly challenging goal in the current climate.

5 Democracy on the Decline Among Young People?

There has been commentary recently suggesting that the very concept of democracy is under threat, especially among young people. According to a recent report, while support for democracy is stable, with 65% of Australians saying, 'democracy is preferable to any other kind of government', one in five (22%) say that 'in some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable' (Kassam, 2019). These statistics are constant across collections of this survey, spanning across decades and common across other liberal democracies, not just Australia's (Heggart et al., 2019). They do emphasise the importance of truly diverse and democratically functioning schools and the role that teachers play in those schools, too. These statistics highlight the complex work of teachers, schools and educational institutions as models for active democracy. This is something that needs to be practised by all teachers, at a classroom level, and not just at an institutional or policy level. Here, I describe how I do this, moving from theory to practice. I will outline my approach to instilling democratic approaches within my students' thinking and the interactions within my classroom. I do this not only to allow them freedom to participate in democratic ways, but also to develop the skills necessary to be informed and enact democratic actions both during and after their schooling lives.

This means making the classroom not a place for moral development, or of becoming a 'good citizen', nor a space to prepare for future engagements with democracy, as 'citizens in waiting' (Biesta, 2010, p. 1; Heggart, 2020, p. 8), but rather to allow them spaces to engage with freedom of thought and expression. According to Hannah Arendt the appearance of freedom ' depends upon a particular way of being together, namely "being-together-in-plurality"' (Arendt in Biesta, 2010, p. 558). I seek to create 'opportunities for political existence inside and outside schools' (Biesta, 2010, p. 557), primarily through linking close readings of core and additional texts to students' out-of-school worlds and their beliefs as a means to 'build a more positive and participative model of teachers and students working together' (Groundwater-Smith, 2009, p. 4).

I consider myself an active and empowered teacher and unionist teaching students how to be active citizens. It is important that I model and display these qualities to my students: 'Representative democracy privileges those who are already politically mature' (Fielding, 2011, p. 66) so 'unless young people experience participatory engagement in a rich way at school, when they leave they are likely to avoid opportunities for participation and public responsibility, not seek them' (Fielding, 2011, p. 66). In light of the movement away from democracy, or an engagement with the process while at school, this is of even greater importance.

6 The Shift to Using Socratic Circles

Some of us are naturally talented in skills of speaking and listening. Most of us, however, need to be explicitly taught these skills—and school is the place where that should be done. Personally, I was not particularly talented in these areas. I'm a product of a reasonably traditional schooling. I was a shy student. Teaching and presenting is a skill I've taught myself. I hated it in school and at university. Funnily enough I chose a career which requires me to present every working day of my life. It wasn't until university that I was asked to share my interpretations of a variety of texts and ideas and my first thought was 'what do you mean that there is more than one interpretation?'. I wasn't really taught to think critically and question until university despite having some wonderfully passionate teachers who were the inspiration for me to take up teaching.

Being a teacher, teacher advocate, and unionist where I am communicating with and having dialogues with hundreds of people a day. I am, of course, an excellent communicator and presenter. I have had lots of practice. I am a leader at my school where my voice is listened to more than others but I probably still do not speak up as much as other leaders which can be problematic when others view leadership as being very verbal. I have had a principal who kept a tally of how many times his leaders contribute in a meeting—talk about pressure! This is the kind of work where adult professional teachers are treated like students and through this process are disempowered. I believe that if we can empower students to share without fear of recourse, or checking over their shoulder for the teacher's response, we may be able to do the same for our colleagues. We can teach these skills through Socratic circles.

Over my teaching career, I have realised that I was not preparing my students to participate in a democratic society. To participate fully, one needs to be able to have the skill of literacy, questioning and speaking and listening. Indeed Dobson (2012) has suggested that refocusing on listening can help to redress the democratic practice deficit. I decided to commit to fully using the teaching method of Socratic circles to address this three years ago.

7 Socratic Circles

A Socratic circle is a protocol for an inclusive classroom discussion where all participants are active: speaking or listening; observing and notetaking by turns. Students sit in concentric circles with the inner circle discussing the text and the outer circle observing the discussion and taking notes on the ideas shared (Brown, 2016). Students experience both circles during the protocol. I have married the work of two United States educators to develop my own Socratic circle protocol and process: Kelly Gallagher, with his article of the week protocol (Gallagher, 2009) and Matt Copeland, with his discussion protocols and observation/reflection sheets (Copeland, 2005).

7.1 History of Socratic Circles

Although I am not an historian, I understand that the teaching strategy, Socratic circles, was named after the ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates. Socrates believed that there was a better way to teach students than by lecturing at them. Our students do not come to us as empty vessels that we then fill with knowledge. Rather, within each student is an untapped wealth of knowledge and understanding. While education seems obsessed with answers, it is questioning that drives the human mind in critical thought (Copeland, 2005). And that questioning sometimes doesn't lead to answers—it might lead to more questions and then more and that leads to deep understanding. Another interesting fact about Socrates is that he was executed for questioning the status quo.

7.2 Why Socratic Circles?

In committing to Socratic circles, I have created a time and space in my classroom where my students' voices are as important as mine. Monologic talk (Wells, 1999) is talk in the classroom that is controlled and instigated by the teacher, one directional and where the teacher acts as the giver of all information. It has also been known as IRE sequencing thanks to the work of Courtney B. Cazden, an US educator and professor (Cazden, 1988). That is, the teacher 'Initiates' a question, the student, usually the same one, 'Responds', and then the teacher 'Evaluates' what the student has said. It is also used universally as Robin Alexander and his colleagues discovered in their 'Five Nations Study' (2005), Alexander studied this and other techniques in classrooms in the UK, India, US, France and Russia. IRE is used in English and non-English speaking classrooms and across all curriculum areas and year levels. Many teachers reading this chapter will likely be starting to reflect on their own discussion methods in the classroom and realise that they would use IRE a lot—I do too! We are so time poor that we often overlook the planning of our classroom discussions. Likely we also experienced a lot of IRE in our own schooling. It is our default questioning technique when under pressure according to Cazden's work and even when we try other methods, it is one we return to time and time again (Cazden, 1988). There are certainly times when IRE is appropriate to use in the classroom. It becomes problematic when IRE is the *only* classroom discussion method. Researchers over the decades agree that IRE severely limits student talk and ensures that only the loudest voices are heard and valued (Nuthall, 2007) and can lead to the perception that learning is either 'wrong' or 'right' (Edwards-Groves et al., 2014). In fact, IRE is in no way how we talk to each other in any other space in our lives. As educators we should be aspiring to use dialogic talk (Alexander, 2005) as much as possible in the classroom. Dialogic talk uses structured questioning and discussion and leads to enhanced learning (Alexander, 2005). This dialogic method, using Socratic circles, gives every student in the classroom a voice.

Through Socratic circles, I am explicitly teaching them the skills of questioning and speaking and listening. The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) declaration notes that our system should create 'successful lifelong learners who…have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy as the foundation for learning…[and who] engage in respectful debate on a diverse range of views' (Education Council 2019, p. 7). These are life skills. I am teaching my students that a deeper understanding of something is possible without a teacher feeding them the answer. My students come to some really creative and beautiful understandings and ideas without me interrupting, or asking them leading questions. They can do this deep thinking together without me telling them what to think.

7.3 *Socratic Circle Protocol*

Essentially, this is my version of a Socratic Circle discussion:

Students read and annotate and interact with a chosen text (usually teacher choice) prior to coming to class to prepare for the discussion (after teacher modelling and explicit teaching of annotation and reading strategies) (Gallagher, 2009).

↓

Students form two groups - inner and outer (we usually choose these groups randomly). The inner circle sits in a circle in the middle of the room. The outer is seated behind the inner circle. The circles are important - they need to be able to face and see their peers.

↓

Facilitator (teacher) reminds both circles of their agreed upon norms.

↓

The inner circle reads the text aloud to focus the class and remind everyone what they are discussing.

↓

The inner circle discusses the text for 10 mins after being given an initiating question (Copeland, 2005) from the facilitator (we progress to students asking their own initiating questions after explicit teaching and modelling of good questioning) - I do not interrupt at all unless absolutely necessary (only if getting way off track).

The outer circle is observing the content and the speaking and listening skills of the inner circle. They have an observation sheet they're making notes on.

↓

After approximately 10 mins when there is a lull I interrupt the inner circle and ask them to summarise their discussion.

↓

The outer circle then debriefs on the inner circle based on their notes. They appraise how the inner circle performed, they problem solve for them, they provide suggestions for improvement and they set a goal for their own inner circle time. This is all facilitated by the teacher who does not provide them with solutions.

↓

The circles swap. Repeat protocol.

↓

Then there is reflection and evaluation time in the end either formally via a reflection form or a written response to a few questions written on the board.

↓

If it's an English class, students write a 'thesis statement' (Copeland, 2005) about the authorial intent of the text and any literary techniques used.

Note. The whole protocol probably takes about a double period at my school—100 mins. I facilitate a Socratic circle once a month during class time.

This strategy only requires an investment of time. Time to choose a text, model annotation, but most importantly taking the risk to step aside from didactic lecturing and do something counter to your colleagues and the dominant approach to education. I acknowledge that time is always a challenge in education, with our competing educational priorities, initiatives and crowded curriculum. However, every minute spent in a Socratic circle with my students has been well worth the time. It is energising for me and my students.

What I love about Socratic Circles is that you can do it in any subject area on any text. I have facilitated them in English, Literacy and Media Studies. I know of other colleagues who have used the method in Mathematics, Humanities and Science classrooms. It is perhaps a strategy that seems most at home within a philosophy class, but I believe it is suitable for all subjects from middle primary school upwards.

7.4 The Role of the Teacher in a Socratic Circle

For a teacher running a Socratic circle their role is shifted, they are no longer the 'sage on the stage', but rather the 'guide on the side', they are a facilitator, tapping into andragogical principles. Allowing the generation of new ideas and possibilities. The teacher is most active during the debrief, guiding and shaping students' responses and discussions with one another. They are timekeepers, models for annotation, creator of initiating questions and the leader who helps the outer circle problem solve and set goals for future discussions. Perhaps the most difficult part of this strategy as a teacher is creating an atmosphere within the room and a culture within the classroom where a Socratic circle can fruitfully occur. It means explicitly teaching the skills of listening (Conti & Smith, 2019), something that is rarely considered important, due to the broader climate of our education system. Gannon and Davies (2007) note that the role of 'English Teacher' is invariably linked to being a reader, and it has been suggested that focusing on the teaching of, and practice of writing is far less common (Kolber, 2020).

Importantly, engaging with the strategy of Socratic circles means more than just trying a strategy that fits within the broader vision of English or literacy education. Instead it means engaging with aspects of teaching that are no longer openly, or popularly discussed. Part of the impact of the VCE assessment, NAPLAN tests predominance and PISA goal-setting, is that writing is very much in the ascendancy, with formulaic writing being predominant (McKnight, 2020). It means engaging with annotation, in close detail (Jewitt, et al, 2005), not only for its own benefits, but to promote reading comprehension (Gallagher, 2009; O'Donnell, 2004) and for deeper exploration of the ideas within the text. Engaging with listening is something that is rarely covered within mainstream English classes, usually kept as knowledge limited to language and EAL (Conti & Smith, 2019; Palmer, 2014).While these skills are seen as important, and are common to the role of teacher, they are rarely ever given centre stage, or become the focus of teacher professional learning. I have found engaging with these less common elements of my teaching curriculums both exciting and professionally challenging.

7.5 Creating the Atmosphere and Culture for a Socratic Circle

The culture of a class is something that I work hard to cultivate, creating a space where voices are heard equally and where voices are neither silenced nor spoken over. The process of creating this culture is of course more art than science and every teachers approach to this will differ, but I would suggest the following as useful:

Creating an atmosphere for a Socratic circle lesson is something I've experimented with. I have found it important to indicate to students that this lesson will be different to the usual lesson structure. I've experimented with a range of tools to do this, including LED candles, mood lighting, a fire or beach view displayed on the screen and ensuring that the protocols are followed closely. Inspired in part by Thornburg's (2004) seminal piece 'Campfires in cyberspace', focused on classroom spaces, I am seeking to create a watering hole, a place where conversations are shared and ideas discussed. Amusingly, as part of this process I often display a campfire on the projector to give students the sense of entering a new and different space. My students really enjoy these changes to their usual learning spaces.

7.6 Data Collection and Formative Assessment Within a Socratic Circle

It's important to me that this work is rigorous and produces information and delivers data to me as the teacher. As such, I have students complete pre and post surveys before and following a process of Socratic circles (often across a term, semester or year). Students reflect on the process both verbally and in writing and I am able to formatively assess them on how they felt about their contributions and those of the group. This sounds good in theory, but actually involves me considering the needs of shyer students and making changes to support them as well as building them up when they contribute in new ways that extend them beyond their own comfort zone.

The tendency to record, grade or assess this task is strong, because the work that students produce is genuinely impressive, however, I've come to realise that this task is most valuable when it is low, or no-stakes. I have considered, but not yet moved towards, a graded Socratic circle in VCE Media, assessing their annotations and reflections rather than the discussion itself. You can imagine a discussion where each participant is seeking to score points, or marks and is therefore listening less and looking for spaces to speak instead. For this reason, separating this aspect from grading has been crucial to my approach (Kohn, 2011).

7.7 Socratic Circles and Remote Learning

This teaching practice can be completed via video conferencing software when necessary and indeed even with masks being worn due to COVID-19. Indeed my class, during the recent (2020) emergency remote learning, said that they wanted to trial a Socratic circle. We did one and then they asked for another!

The thing that is most different about online delivery, however, is the way that there is no way for me to check their engagement levels. It is too easy for them to switch off or become distracted when they are online. Face to face really does make them more accountable to the learning activity.

8 Benefits for Students

My students love Socratic circles. Participating in Socratic circles with me for a year in my classroom, they tell me (taken from verbally and written feedback and evaluations):

- They like speaking in class more and that they are better at it
- They become better at posing questions
- They become better readers

- They know how to draw quieter classmates into the discussion (they are really conscious of dominating voices—what a wonderful skill to develop as a teenager!)
- That they know how to challenge someone's point of view in a respectful way
- They are more confident at speaking and sharing their views with others

When I asked them explicitly what they think they learned from our year of doing Socratic circles, specifically about themselves, others, or the texts/issues that were discussed, one student stated that they, 'learnt that talking to others and listening to others is a great way to learn'. Another student stated that they 'learnt different ways to get people to contribute and the different types of questions you can ask to encourage more discussion' and that they like to have their 'opinion heard by the group in discussions' (Kolber, 2019).

When I asked them what skills they think they developed over the year one student stated that they 'learnt how a single text/image can be perceived in many different ways (in English + Media)'. Another student stated they learned skills such as 'communication skills, how to ask more open ended questions to encourage discussion, how to read social cues such as when someone wants to contribute but is shy or if someone is uncomfortable', whereas another student said that they learnt 'the skill of including EVERYONE'—what important life skills! If only certain people we come across in our own adult lives had learned these skills!

Lastly, when I asked them for advice to give future students of mine before we embark on another Socratic circle journey together, one student stated, 'make sure you give it a go, once you speak once it makes it much easier to contribute again…Also do not be afraid to ask for clarification or to challenge a view, in a respectful way, because it can create more discussion and give you more insight into someone's views'. While another student who truly learned the value of participatory learning shared, 'Just give it a try, nothing is a wrong answer'.

9 Conclusion

I look to many of our world's leaders and decision-makers and see their confidence. These are people who are confident speakers. They know how to present and speak in front of groups of people. But many have no substance, no ideas or deep thinking of their own going on behind the facade.

Then I look at the students sitting in my classroom. I think about the beautiful, deep thinkers that we all have in our classrooms. I want these students to be full of confidence and equipped to enter the adult world being able to share their deep, creative thoughts with others. To be able to respectfully challenge the status quo. I want these kinds of people to be the ones to make decisions and policies in education and other important areas rather than some of the puppets we see currently.

This is where I am at in my journey so far in making my classroom a more democratic space and I'll be honest—I am still a dictator for much of the time!

We need much more democracy in education than we currently have. Many teachers feel voiceless when it comes to the decisions made about their day to day and that is just unacceptable. But I think we also need to be modelling this in our classrooms as educators. Giving my students more opportunity to express their own democratic freedoms has yet to backfire on me. It has only made me more confident that I am on the right path with what I believe an Australian education should be for teachers and for our students.

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Jemina Kolber is a proud career teacher and leader of 14 years within Victorian public secondary schools, teaching English, Media Studies and Literacy. She has extensive leadership experience in literacy improvement, pedagogy and student management. She served as a president of 'Teachers Across Borders Australia' and has travelled to Cambodia numerous times to work with Khmer teachers to improve student learning. As an elected Australian Education Union (Victoria) Branch councillor, Jemina regularly represents her colleagues in state and national news pieces. Fundamentally, Jemina believes in the power of unionism to engender desperately needed equity within the Australian broken schools funding model.

Leveraging Teachers' Collective Voices

The logical place to develop teachers who are empowered is within schools themselves. However, too often, interventions and improvement agendas see teachers being asked to represent a range of issues that exist beyond the school site. They are asked to be media personalities, to become social media influencers, contribute to reviews, be consultants, become lobbyists, leaders of activist groups and many others. While some of these things can be positive and support empowerment, taken as a whole, they become untenable and unreasonable. For teachers, the demands of the profession seem to be constantly expanding—something that has been appropriately described as 'job creep'.

Within schools, teachers are time poor and can be overwhelmed by both the workload and the endless, and increasing, complexity of their work. Unfortunately, outside of schools, teachers can often feel further stretched in multiple directions, as even a disempowered profession needs its champions and those who will speak to the realities within schools. This fact can lead many teachers to pursue other commitments that do not necessarily contribute, or indeed relate to, their core work of educating students. For this reason, what is called for is a collective voice, for teachers to share views, values and ideas with the broader community and their colleagues. Traditionally, and with few exceptions, the role of teachers' collective voice comes to us via the auspices of unions and professional associations. In this section, the way that union and non-union activism can challenge existing belief systems is explored, with a focus on examples and case studies that show promise and have proven successful. The role education unions have in empowering teachers, not only in regard to industrial and workplace conditions but also through discussions of pedagogy, debate framing, media campaigns and teacher platforming is often overlooked. We believe that activism is best undertaken by collective action and by collaborative professionalism. Union movements, in the past, have not always addressed non-industrial issues as forcefully as those of an industrial nature. However, the need for union renewal highlights the manner in which these actions now need to be considered. It must also be noted also that, in many respects, the industrial actions of unions lay the foundation for further empowerment. Factors like pay, workload and representation provide the baseline that teachers can use to undertake further action. We propose strongly that where industrial conditions of teachers are more positive, teachers are as a direct result more empowered.

Teacher activism, within or beyond the auspices of teacher unions is increasingly important, to work to improve their own conditions, and to be shown to be acting to address societal issues that affect their students and their society. Teachers have a tendency towards passivity and rule following, so finding avenues to pursue activism is difficult, though important. The rise of student activism provides a significant approach for teachers to parlay their concern for the future into activism as manifested by their students.

Education has a tendency towards maintaining a dominant orthodoxy around the ideas that are popularly shared and discussed. Those who actively challenge this orthodoxy can expose themselves to increased risks around their employment, promotion and through many other ways via subterfuge. There is also the question of moving the dominant narrative beyond and into new areas to continue to move thinking forward. Teachers have proven increasingly capable and dynamic in finding ways to make these challenges and changes, including through social media and traditional media manipulation. As ever, these types of guerilla tactics are less impactful than large organisations and think tanks, meaning engagement through the collective power continues to be important, while noting ongoing renewal and revitalisation is an ongoing project. Balancing personal risk, in a litigious sense, with collective power, offers those within education a range of ways forward towards influence.

Keith Heggart uses a framework for citizenship education that he developed to show ways that teachers have been diminished to mere deliverers of content rather than those who bring forth the next generation of citizens. This framing itself shows great promise for empowering teachers and he provides practical proposals for how this could be achieved.

Amy Cotton shows that union action can, and should, expand beyond industrial concerns, taking on a welcoming and inclusive stance that includes discussions of pedagogy and broader debates within education. The strategies she outlines are low-cost, achievable and require only minimal commitment of staff time, but show very clear and positive outcomes for developing member voice and confidence within the work of the union.

Mihalja Gavin provides a carefully considered way that unionism can be used to address the challenges and threats of a neoliberal economic view of education. She provides coverage of how unions can develop organic intellectuals, educating and empowering teachers to support the ongoing work of the union and gain confidence in their importance within the education system.

Australian Teachers as Democracy Workers

Keith Heggart

Abstract Most visions of democracy recognise the important role played by educators and education systems in ensuring that young people are both informed and capable and willing to act on that knowledge by exercising their democratic rights. This means that teachers, and especially those working in formal educational institutions, have a key role to play in the development of an active and informed citizenry. Yet teachers are often limited in their capacity to do this well—either through their own lack of knowledge, or through policy constraints that limit their agency. In addition, popular (and populist) media often presents teachers as either unintelligent or apathetic, or dangerous liberals. This chapter seeks to reframe this debate and show how teachers might embrace their role as democracy workers. It does this by, firstly, outlining the challenges facing educators as a whole, and the teaching of civics and citizenship in particular. It then describes how teachers might enact their role as exemplars of active—and perhaps even activist—citizens, and to do so in a way that encourages the development of active citizenship amongst their students.

1 Teaching: A Profession Under Attack

The teaching profession in Australia is under attack from many avenues. Even leaving to one side the ongoing and repetitive comments from politicians and radio 'personalities' about teachers not working hard enough, or having too many holidays, there are assaults from policymakers and even academics (and fellow teachers) on teaching and its status as a profession, with some arguing that there is little skill involved in managing a classroom, or that all the work is done by publishing companies, or it's simply a matter of teaching from the textbook and to the test. Much of this criticism is gendered: the majority of the teaching workforce is made up of women, and not surprisingly, especially in early childhood settings, they continue to be paid much less than other, male-dominated professions with similar qualifications.

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However, perhaps the most sinister imposition comes from the role of third party actors who are seeking to control what teachers do, and the manner in which they do it. This has come from many different sides. There are academics who are often distant from the profession, yet don't hesitate to insist that they know how teachers should perform in and out of the classroom (Gore & Gitlin, 2004). There are federally funded programmes that devalue the profession by equating it to what is effectively 'on the job training' (Carr, 2017). There are so-called thought leaders, who are quick to point out everything that the schooling system does wrong, and to affirm how 'broken' it is—usually closely followed by a promotion of their book or training programmes (Eacott, 2017). And, of course, it would be foolish to ignore the ongoing meddling of politicians within the educational system, at both a state and federal level (Visentin & Baker, 2021). Teachers are constantly assailed by updated curricula, as well as increased requirements to teach about domestic violence, or road safety, or anti-radicalisation programmes or so many others.

I am not for a moment suggesting that education, and schooling in particular, should not teach about any or all of these things. Nor am I suggesting that everything that schools do is perfect or should be absented from criticism. Indeed, I believe quite the opposite. But the point that I am making—and it is a point that has been made before, by myself and others—is that the people best placed to make the decisions about the changes that education requires are those working within the profession: that is, the teachers themselves. Yet it is teachers who are largely absent from discussions about the profession. TV talk shows often fail to invite educators on, to discuss education, instead opting for academics or researchers. The board of the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) provides another example of the exclusion of teachers from decision-making bodies. This organisation wields significant power through the development of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which all teachers must meet and continue to meet throughout their career as a requirement of their registration (although compliance with these is delegated to state bodies, such as the New South Wales Educational Standards Authority [NESA]). In other jurisdictions, such as New Zealand, the equivalent body has to have a composition of at least half the board being practising teachers. Yet there is no such requirement within AITSL. While many of those on the board have at the least a tangential relationship to education and teaching, this misses the point—the board's make-up can be changed at will by the Federal Education Minister—and the profession has no recourse to remedy this.

Initial teacher education is another area where the voices of practising teachers are absent. Recent symposiums (Australian Council of Deans of Education [ACDE], 2019) raised concerns about the quality of students becoming teachers and suggested a raft of different measures. Think tanks like the Grattan Institute (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020) suggested new classifications of teachers—like the UK's advanced skills teacher programme—and others suggested raising the tertiary entrance score required to enter initial teacher education programmes. Filmmakers, pre-service teachers, Deans of education, newspaper editors and politicians were consulted and spoke at the conference—but representatives of practising teachers, such as teaching unions, were only invited at the last minute, once again underscoring the lack of input into discussions about their profession.

At a more granular level, there are increasing strictures limiting the ability of teachers to take part in the civic sphere. For many professions, social media networks have provided an opportunity to speak to an audience of millions in a fashion unmediated by others (Iredale et al., 2019). Yet teachers are increasingly wary about their interactions in such a space, risking approbation and even termination based on their interactions and commentary. Indeed, many teachers have forsaken social media, despite its obvious advantages, not least in networking and professional development, in order to feel more secure in their employment (Carpenter & Harvey, 2019). On the other hand, teachers that still use social media restrict their use to anodyne comments, showing a one-dimensional aspect of the profession, or faithfully toeing a party line at the expense of their professional standing. Teachers may still be able to use social media, and speak to a public audience, but I question the value of them being able to do this if they cannot speak freely about matters pertaining to their professional expertise, without fear of repercussions.

This state of affairs is untenable. Indeed, for the reasons outlined above, and many others, there is increasing concern about factors like teacher recruitment, attrition and recruitment (Gallop et al., 2021). While different pathways into the profession and increased remuneration might be part of the solution, they will not come without activism from the teaching body; that is, instead of just teaching young people to be active citizens, teachers themselves need to embrace an activist stance in their professional work. Approaches to teaching civics and citizenship offer some ideas as to how teachers might do this.

2 The Challenges Facing Civics and Citizenship Educators

It is a strange time to be a civics and citizenship educator, in Australia and around the world. On the one hand, there appears to be a swelling of student or youth-led social movements taking action within the public spheres, both online and offline—and often together. On the other hand, the very nature of democracy and democratic institutions seems to be threatened by the rise of authoritarian, opaque approaches to government and even outright totalitarianism in some countries (Keane, 2020). Into this mix—and further complicating already complex matters—are the opportunities and challenges presented by ubiquitous social media and digital technologies which promise greater connection between individuals and groups and increased opportunities for civic engagement, yet at the same time present very real threats to users' privacy and agency, (Wells, 2015), as well as presenting challenges related to the scale of mis- and disinformation (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017).

Despite the rise of these social movements and the opportunities for civic engagement they represent, it appears that the civic knowledge of many youths is in decline. It is not hard to find news articles decrying the lack of civic literacy amongst Australian youth (Ghazarian et al., 2021). Indeed, these news headlines often extend beyond national borders; anti-democratic sentiment appears to be on the increase, according to some scholars (Foa & Mounk, 2016), and the youth of today are supposedly more in favour of a military dictatorship, for example, than ever before. While much of this is disputed (Alexander & Welziel, 2017), assessments such as the National Assessment Program—Civics and Citizenship (NAP-CC) have identified that young people in Australia are failing to reach the expected standards of civic literacy. Indeed, the most recent report indicates that less than half of Year 10 students are performing at what might be described as proficient (Fraillon et al., 2020). The results are slightly higher for younger students, but certainly not anywhere that might be described as acceptable.

3 The Malaise Among Youth

Nor is this a new phenomena: results going back to 2004 in Australia indicate the same malaise and lack of achievement amongst Australian youth. Last century, the Civics Expert Group (CEG) identified that Australians of all ages were ignorant and apathetic, and it was especially a problem amongst young people. It was this that gave rise to *Discovering Democracy*, the Federal Government's programme to improve civic literacy amongst Australia's youth. It appears, based on the NAP-CC, that despite significant investment, it failed to achieve its stated purpose.

These failures of civic literacy are, of course, not evenly distributed. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds, or those who attend schools in those areas, are likely to fare less well than their colleagues from higher economic backgrounds. Students in regional and remote locations are also more likely to be less civically literate than their peers in metropolitan areas. And students from Indigenous backgrounds also struggle to become proficient in civic knowledge. Of course, the real areas of concern lie where students belong to more than one of these groups: then the effects of combined disadvantage are especially significant, and students in these positions are at risk of being disenfranchised from their right to participate in Australia's civic society.

There have been a number of reasons posited as to why this might be the case. In Australia, scholars like Suzanne Mellor (2003) have suggested that part of the problem lies in the lack of civic literacy and knowledge of teachers. She indicated that very few teachers, at either primary or secondary level, had undertaken any study about civics or politics. While programmes like *Discovering Democracy* did provide professional development for teachers, the funding ran out quickly, and did little to develop a sustainable body of expert civics teachers. This means that teachers often felt poorly prepared to teach the civics and citizenship curriculum. Such feelings might have led to teachers only teaching it superficially, or avoiding parts of it entirely.

4 Questionable Curriculum Offerings

Another problem might be related to the civics and citizenship curriculum itself. The most significant investment in civics and citizenship education (CCE) in the last 30 years was, as already mentioned, the *Discovering Democracy* curriculum. While the curriculum itself was considered to be of high quality (Erebus Consulting Group, 2003), there were criticisms from some researchers and teachers that the curriculum failed to address the interests of Australian youth (Kennedy, 1997; O'Loughlin, 1997). Instead, there was too much focus on the mechanisms of government, and the institutions of that government, and not enough on those topics that were relevant to the everyday lives of students in Australian schools and communities.

The final significant problem lies in the fact that in many jurisdictions, the place of CCE was, and still remains, unclear. This is despite the fact that the development of active and informed citizens is a central goal of the Australian education system, and has been since at least the Melbourne Declaration (2008), which states that one of the fundamental aims of the Australian Curriculum is the development of 'active and informed citizens' (p. 7). There is something of a gap between the policy and the practice, at both an institutional level and the individual classroom level. In New South Wales, for example, CCE was incorporated into History and Geography, and in many cases, entirely ignored in other subjects. More recently, the Australian Curriculum made promising noises about the importance of CCE, but the latest iteration of the curriculum indicates that, once again, civics and citizenship are less important than subjects like Mathematics and English. As an example of this, one might note that, in the primary years, CCE has been subsumed entirely into other subjects alongside History and Geography.

Another troubling sign that our approach to CCE in Australia might be past its use-by date is the fact that, despite the social activism sweeping the world in terms of topics like Black Lives Matter, March for Our Lives and the School Strike for Climate, young people don't appear to link that to what they are learning about in terms of civics and citizenship. Indeed, broader social movements, such as #Occupy, were regularly castigated by critics for their lack of clarity about goals and means to achieve them (Castells, 2015). This led to the notion of protest as identity, and social movement cultures (Tufekci, 2017). This failure to connect what, by any stroke of the imagination, is the very real practice of active citizenship with the subject known as CCE was present even amongst politicians in Australia, some of whom insisted students should return to their classrooms, rather than engage in any kind of protest about climate change (ABC News, 2018).

This paints a troubling picture of both the present and the future of civics and citizenship education, and perhaps even the future of democracy in countries like Australia. Yet this book is not about civics and citizenship education, and one might question the relevance of this to the notion of empowering teachers and democratising schooling. How is active citizenship, and students' declining civic literacy, related to the broader themes of teacher empowerment? To my mind, the answer is simple: rather than being two separate problems within our education system, they are the two sides of the same problem. In other words, educators can and should remedy the problems facing civics and citizenship education, and the lack of engagement of students with this area, by embracing their role as democracy workers.

5 Teachers *as* Active Citizens not just Teaching *about* Active Citizens

The description I've provided above is a deeply concerning state of affairs. The combined assaults upon teachers in the form of increased accountability, the lack of a voice in policy discussions and an inability to engage and advocate in the public sphere have meant that the profession itself is at risk of being hollowed out. This is terrible for the status of teachers, but I would argue that it raises grave concerns for the state of our civil society and democracy as well. This is because teachers are far more than curriculum deliverers—or child-minders! They are essential democracy workers.

In using the term democracy workers, I am referencing the notion of teachers as cultural workers, as suggested by Freire (2018). This is a central tenet of many critical pedagogies and recognises the work done by educators to build and sustain cultures of democracy within schools, but also more broadly within civil society. According to Kozleski and Handy (2017, p. 207), 'Cultural workers foreground the cultural complexities of their situated experiences while aiming to produce cultures that transform prevailing inequalities and injustices in public education'. This definition is a good starting point for thinking about teachers as cultural workers, but more importantly, as democracy workers. The focus on the role of transforming injustices and inequalities is central to many approaches to education, and it remains a constant theme of different educational jurisdictions. Perhaps it is not surprising that Australia's education system has been classified as both high quality and low equity (Thomson & Teese, 2016)—or that researchers have discovered that Australia's mixed model of public and publicly funded private schools often is an exercise in segregation along lines of race and wealth (Ho, 2015).

Aristotle said that, for there to be liberty, it was necessary for all citizens 'to rule and be ruled in turn' (Aristotle et al., 1995, p. 12). This is a simple encapsulation of three of the important principles of democracy: equality, justice and participation. In order to ensure democracy, the Athenians felt that civic education was vital, and indeed, they recognise the role that all of the community had to play in that civic education. While that form of democracy was limited in many respects, it does provide us with some insights into remedying some of the ailments afflicting education in Australia.

The key part of the concept of teachers and democracy workers is that they aim to produce cultures that transform prevailing inequalities. This is an active stance—perhaps even an active transformative stance (Stetsenko, 2015) and it is significantly different to the notion of teachers as simply transmitters of knowledge, which dominates so much of the mainstream approaches to curriculum design, even in the field of civics and citizenship education.

However, even more than that, I would argue that ascribing to this notion of teachers as democracy workers means embracing the idea that teachers need to not just educate the next generation of active citizens; rather, they need to demonstrate active, or perhaps even activist citizenship themselves. This is a step significantly further than most other progressive notions of education, which might privilege student centred or active learning opportunities.

6 Teaching the History of Democracy is Insufficient

It is not enough for teachers to teach about the history of Australian democracy, for example. Much of the current civics and citizenship curriculum is devoted to discussions about either the history of Australian democracy, or the various mechanisms and manifestations as they are present within Australian society. An inordinate amount of time is spent discussing the responsibilities of individual citizens, or the structure of government at state, local and federal levels. While this certainly has a place, by making it the focus of civics and citizenship education, it ultimately moves both students and teachers away from the locus of power: in other words, they come to see themselves almost as supplicants to governmental institutions—rather than those who are responsible for empowering the same institutions. Despite making claims towards active citizenship, such approaches do anything but.

Even where there is a focus on students being active in their local communities, this is limited, for the most part, to either learning about other examples of activism—which, again, I note as being important, or, at best, planning for possible campaigns or other civic actions that could be implemented at some point in the future. It is not enough for teachers to teach students about some of the great civil rights movements or protest actions or legislative changes—either in the past, or currently taking place. There is very little attention given to how young people can and should be active immediately—how they might be 'citizens-in-action', rather than 'citizens-in-waiting' (Arvanitakis & Marren, 2009).

Needless to say, these approaches lead to the disappointing outcomes that were described above. After all, what reason is there to learn about civics and citizenship education if you're not going to have much opportunity to practice it—at least until after you leave school? Instead, it is necessary to find a way that teaches young people the requisite civic literacy through civic activism—rather than simply storing up knowledge in the hope of being able to action it at some later, as yet undefined date.

Fortunately, we know the best way to do this. Numerous reports into civics and citizenship education, in Australia and internationally (for example, see Kerr, 1999) have highlighted two key concepts: students are far more likely to be both civically literate and civically active if they are already engaged in some kind of community or participatory endeavour—at the same time that are learning about civics and citizenship. And perhaps even more importantly, they are more likely to be civically active and civically literate if they have direct contact with role models (often parents or other family members in the extant literature) who are civically active.

7 Teachers as Democracy Workers

It is the second point that is central to this chapter. I propose that teachers become democracy workers when they demonstrate to students both how students might already be active citizens, but also how teachers themselves are active in the public sphere. In a very Deweyian (1916) perspective, teachers have a role to nurture the development for the next generation of active citizens—and the mechanism to do this is by demonstrating (and not just teaching) active citizenship.

Teachers have responsibility for the development of democratic ideals amongst our youth and, more broadly, they contribute to the health of democracies in nation states. This position is not revolutionary: scholars as far back as Aristotle and Plato have acknowledged the intrinsic links between education and democracy, although it should be noted that Plato was not entirely in favour of democracy.

Aristotle was also very much in favour of what we might term experiential education. He argued that in order to learn to do something, we needed to do it: Speaking about the nexus between learning and participation, Aristotle said, ‘For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them’ (Aristotle & Sachs, 2002, p. 9).

This is a common theme within civics and citizenship education, which has been criticised in the past as nothing more than passively storing up information to perhaps use in the future (Shermis & Barth, 1982). Progressive scholars and activists such as Rousseau, John Stuart Mill and John Dewey have made similar arguments about the importance of civic education; indeed, Dewey wrote widely on the role that schooling plays in the shaping of democracy and the civil sphere.

However, much of the focus has been on the students within this paradigm. While I acknowledge the paramount importance of students and learning outcomes within any school setting, I feel that this is short-sighted, especially in the case of civics and citizenship education. More than perhaps any other subject within the school curriculum, for students to develop into what the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) declaration calls active and informed members of the community, they need to see what such a form of activism might look like. For some students, they will have role models in their families or communities external to the school—but this will not be the case for all students. It might not even be the case for most. Who, then, will model what it means to be an active citizen to Australia’s school students? More importantly, who will, through the medium of shared experience, demonstrate the importance and value of being involved in the civic sphere of our democracy? The answer is, of course, teachers.

8 What Might Teachers as Democracy Workers Look like?

This idea is, perhaps, a revolutionary one, and I have no doubt that it will be a challenging notion for many teachers, and many other members of the broader education community. To begin with, I want to clarify the point I am making: I am not suggesting a form of indoctrination, as might be imagined by various teacher-critics. Nor am I insisting on inculcating a kind of left-wing progressivism at the expense of all other points of view. Rather, my aim in redefining teachers as democracy workers is broader than that, and is based on three main points. Firstly, I acknowledge the important role that teachers play in education, and especially education about democracy and empowerment. Secondly, through their practice, teachers model what it means to be empowered and active in civil society. Finally, teachers can also model productive and meaningful opposition to anti-democratic principles and action.

It might seem disingenuous to emphasise the important role that teachers play in educating young people in Australia. After all, few would argue that engagement in school is formative in many aspects, and that is why schools classify their work as education, which has an attendant moral paradigm (Biesta, 2017), rather than simply learning, which is absent from these discussions about morality and ethics. In their role as democracy workers, teachers have the opportunity to teach students *about* democracy and education. There are ample opportunities for this to be done in different key learning areas, and especially in areas like History, Geography and other social sciences (and especially civics and citizenship), and, indeed, such approaches have a long history in Australia and overseas.

However, rather than teaching students about previous or historical examples, as is common in these cases, I would suggest that teachers should instead be encouraged to make use of recent and current events—that is, events that have relevance and cachet to the students sitting in their classrooms. The backwards focus I describe—the study of democracy as past, rather than democracy as present—was one of the main criticisms of *Discovering Democracy* (Kennedy, 1997; O'Loughlin, 1997) and it is still present today in many parts of the Australian Curriculum. It comes from the notion that, in order to become an active citizen in the future, students must first store up information about civic mechanisms—something that doesn't seem supported by much of the literature (Shermis & Barth, 1982). Unfortunately, at present, there is little opportunity for student input into much of the civics and citizenship curriculum. While there is a case that, for example, Science curricula should be set by experts, this is not the case for civics and citizenship—after all, who better to discuss what matters to young people than young people themselves?

As teachers committed to the notions of democracy, it is our responsibility to find ways to integrate current issues of democratic attention into the work that we do. This might be as simple as finding a relevant news story to discuss with students within a KLA area, or it might be more involved, such as modelling and then explicitly explaining, democratic processes in the practice of our classroom. Of course, this is always easier said than done: teachers are often concerned about teaching 'hot moments' or controversial issues in the classroom, fearing students might misunderstand, or being accused of indoctrination, or perhaps even being called out by politicians (Chrysanthos & Baker, 2021). This leads to the second way that teachers can strengthen democracy within their schools and classrooms: as models of active citizenship.

While the topics of curriculum and key learning areas are, to a large extent, mandated by government and other authorities, the most important aspects of education—the relational ones—are often left solely to teachers, or perhaps schools and systems that govern them. Developing these relationships is central to what it means to a good teacher, but it's not a simple process, and teachers often do it very differently from each other. Much of this relational development occurs in the interstitial spaces between formal educational moments. These islands of emotion and connection often take the form of an amusing story, a shared understanding, or a discovery of a common interest. These moments form bonds that skilful teachers can then use to contextualise learning in such a way that improves individual and class learning outcomes. I'm sure everyone can remember a teacher who showed interest in a passion that wasn't strictly school-related, and the rush of affection and belonging that accompanied that interest. As much as lesson plans and assessment tasks and deep content knowledge, this emotional and relational work is what makes a good teacher.

The development and maintenance of these relationships are central to the schooling experience. They also showcase the importance of teachers as role models to the students in their care. This is where the second theme fits: by these relational practices, teachers can model what it means to be an active and informed member of their community. It is not for no reason that teachers are often held to a higher standard of professional behaviour than many other professions—for example, politicians. This is because of the recognition that teachers have a fundamental role in the development of the next generation that extends well beyond literacy and numeracy; rather, in very Deweyesque (1916) terms, teachers guide the next generation through the process of learning to live in a democratic society.

This places significant responsibility upon the shoulders of teachers, and I should note that not all teachers live up to this responsibility—at least not all the time. Nevertheless, it provides teachers with a powerful opportunity to not just tell, but to show students what it means to be a member of the community in a democracy. This can be done through in class practices, such as those described above, but I think they are even more powerful through bridging the gap between school and community. In other words, the more teachers share the ways they are already active in their local and global communities, the more likely students are to recognise the value of that.

Teachers can and should draw on their own experiences as active citizens to explain how they navigate their communities, how they contribute to the public good, and how they engage with the public sphere. This might be as simple as discussing their membership of a local sporting club, or a trade union, or their opinions about an important topic of the day. In order to become active citizens, young people need to see other active citizens in action—and there are few better placed to do this than their teachers. After all, it was an incredibly powerful experience for the young people at the School Strike For Climate to see their teachers join them at the rally points, indicating both their support for action on climate change, but the role of young people to demand that action for their elected representatives.

And, of course, the more teachers are required to do this, then the more likely it is that teachers are to be active—or more likely, more active—in those communities, and this will further strengthen the profession of teaching and its unique position within society. In other words, by modelling active and engaged citizenship to their students, teachers become more active and empowered within their own professional and personal communities—and that has to be good for the profession as a whole, considering the parlous nature of the attacks upon it.

The final point to make about teachers and democracy workers is perhaps the most important one. As well as teaching about empowerment and democracy, and modelling the same, I think teachers as democracy workers need to model opposition to anti-democratic democracy action. This is also perhaps the most challenging task facing teachers, yet it is not entirely absent from their practice already. It is apparent that, in many places around the world, there is a rise in extremist political parties, especially on the right, that emphasise nationalism and populism (Gholami, 2018), often at the expense of things like multiculturalism and diversity. These principles are antithetical to democracy, and to global citizenship more broadly, which recognises the strength that diversity brings to communities.

Yet these forms of extremism also target schools, seeking to amplify their message and recruit young people to their causes. Teachers are empowered to shut down racist dialogue, and indeed, they are expected to do so, much as they might try to eliminate bullying within a school setting. Yet this area is becoming much more challenging to delineate, amidst claims of 'cancel culture' and the right to free speech. The role played by social media and mobile technologies also means that the borders between schools and communities are increasingly porous, or entirely non-existent. After all, if a teacher knows a student is watching questionable videos on social media, on their own personal device, outside of school time, should they take action about it? Or is it none of the teachers' business?

The solution to this, and similar problems, is through explicitly modelling opposition to what I describe as anti-democratic action. Teachers need to teach young people to critically engage with all the myriad sources that present information to them, of course at school, but even more crucially in their own personal lives and via their social media feeds. After all, what value is it to young people if they can critically interrogate a newspaper article, but not question the disinformation or misinformation present on Twitter? If we're to safeguard democracy—and perhaps even improve the health of it—against the forces of fascism and totalitarianism, teachers need to explicitly engage in education about these dangers.

9 Conclusion

My argument above begins by stating that the ongoing devaluing of the profession of teachers and the concerning performance of Australia's youth in civic literacy tests are related; they represent the fact that teachers are increasingly being seen solely in an instrumental capacity, and education itself is becoming a robotic, soulless endeavour. To remedy this situation, I propose a redefinition of teachers as democracy workers, empowering and placing them in a central position of importance to the nurturing and sustaining of the health of democratic states. In order to work as democracy workers, teachers need to teach about democracy, and especially as it pertains to the young people in their care. They also need to teach through democracy, by modelling active citizenship practices to their students. And finally, they need to explicitly challenge and critique anti-democratic action in their classrooms. Through this renewed importance, teachers will not only protect democracy, but also empower themselves and raise their status in the future.

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Finding Teachers' Voices

Amy Cotton

Abstract The need to find, promote and sustain the voices of teachers is essential to teacher empowerment. This chapter describes the ways that this process was developed within a union context. The chapter analyses the successes and failures of various initiatives employed within the context of teaching union professional learning, highlighting key themes including: creating connections across contexts, supporting specific groups that are otherwise marginalised, and the challenges of the generational divide when working within well-established organisations. The idea of renewal is not unique to unions, carrying relevance to schools, professional associations and academic faculties, but here a case study of how best to navigate this challenge is explored. The specific strategies discussed take the form of: TeachMeets; a young members' initiative; educational debates; and a book club. From all of these strategies, a clear message emerges: finding teachers' voices means engaging them as more than instruments of the curriculum. Instead, it requires engaging with teachers and the professional as fully rounded humans with agency and capacity of their own.

1 Introduction

It was frustration with the public debate about teachers, teaching and education policy that led me from the high school classroom to the world of education policy. Previously, I had taught in a variety of government and non-government schools and been active in my subject teaching association, the New South Wales English Teachers Association (ETA NSW). The association and its members had been my training ground for understanding the ways policy interacted with practice. It had given me a glimpse into the uphill effort that the teacher members put into trying to secure audiences with government bodies and politicians. The sheer quantity of hours put into consulting with membership and researching before providing a lengthy, teacher practice informed submission paper was staggering. In my heart, I began to suspect that the resultant meetings were fleeting and perfunctory, the submissions

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noted but not, ultimately, influencing policy revision. This awareness was in no way a criticism of the work of the association but rather an observation that those writing the policy were not responding to teachers' voices.

My eventual move from classroom to policy work started with a role within the New South Wales Institute of Teachers (NSWIT), where I worked specifically in professional development policy design, negotiation and implementation. The idea of the Institute was idealistically stated to be 'an institute to represent the professional interests of teachers [that] will have both significant and positive impacts on the profession, and most importantly on the quality of learning for our children' (New South Wales, *Institute of Teachers Bill Second Reading*, Legislative Council, 29 June 2004, 10416). The first part of that sentence was inspiring to me—the idea that, like other professions, teachers would have an independent body that would represent their professional interests was powerful. The sting in the sentence starts with 'most importantly', however, and while I certainly agree that the quality of learning to which children have access is of vital importance, it highlights that the interests of the teachers are always subservient to, or of secondary importance to, a separate group of people. It's a difficult line to negotiate—teachers choose to teach because they value children's education and will often undertake that role, task and duty in subpar conditions and enduring much adversity to fulfil it. They will often place children's education above their own needs. Children, however, have many bodies that represent them well, so the question is—do teachers deserve a body that puts them first?

While working within policy development at the Institute, I observed a pattern in the way that teachers, and policy regarding teachers or the act of teaching, are discussed. It is often framed as what can teachers do to improve the data around student achievement, or what can teachers do to better serve the needs of the State by eradicating wider societal problems like poverty, inequity and exclusion (Anyon, 2014; Aronson et al., 2021). It was rarely talked about in terms of what can be done to improve the professional interests of teachers, or how the profession could be positively impacted. Rarely was the idea of how to make things easier for a teacher floated, instead the focus would be on how to create metrics that would measure teacher performance, and whether that could be linked to student achievement data. When political debates or media storms rose about teachers, their status, or professionalism, it was rare for the Institute to advocate on behalf of teachers, that is, to point out how their status as professionals was already impressive.

Taking a role as a professional officer at the Independent Education Union of Australia, New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory Branch (IEU), I welcomed the opportunity to work for an organisation whose purpose was the representation of its members (teachers and support staff in non-government schools and teachers in early childhood centres). My primary interest was in the idea of teacher voice, and how it could be supported, amplified and find a place in the vigorous education debates that occur in politics, policy creation and media.

When education, schools, curriculum, assessment or teaching is discussed in the media, it is usually done by education commentators who haven't a teaching degree and lack experience in the field excepting that they once attended a school and may have personally known children whom went to school. Their evidence was anecdotal, their understanding and ideas very focused through the lens by which they had experienced education. Often their ideas were antiquated or based on research that was disproven decades previous. Sometimes the ideas were actively exclusionary or unfeasible. Politicians with education briefs were often the same—their ideas reactionary to sensational media frenzy or to data pulled from questionable surveys or dubious standardised testing regimes.

After being denigrated for decades by politicians and the media in a closed loop dialogue that excludes any voice from actual professionals in the field, it is little wonder that teachers often choose to stay quiet. The media hasn't shown sustained interest in amplifying their voices, or even fact checking their sensationalist education headlines. Politicians use teacher bashing as a headline grabber and a sure way to get to every voter's heart. Everyone has an opinion on schooling—having been a student gives people a feeling of proprietary authority over the institution. Couple this with the way teachers are portrayed in film and television (either as bumbling idiots with hearts of gold or saviours with a one trick cure-all) and teachers aren't starting from a position of strength to advocate against common cultural stereotypes and myths. The lack of respect or space for teachers' voice in debates about their profession and education is what Ladson-Billings (2014) describes as '…a transformation of the teacher from hero to scapegoat in the society'.

This chapter will begin with examining the challenges as to finding teachers voices (plural, not monolith), eliciting them to engage and speak, and building their skills and confidence to speak loudly. It details a series of trial programmes in growing teacher voice and capacity to represent their profession. It will look at practical ways that were used in attempts to spark interest, form communities, grow voice and give platforms to diverse voices from within the teaching profession.

2 Recognising the Challenges

In any consideration of the challenges that are faced in eliciting voice, the demographics of the workforce are key. The 31 000 strong membership (at 2018) of the IEU was approximately 71% women and 28% men with a further 1% choosing not to be identified in a binary gender normative manner. Consistently, the members who acted as spokespeople for the IEU were men, usually white, often from the Catholic schooling sector, and more likely to be from high schools. Our team realised that the speakers did not accurately represent the breadth of the membership. We had no data on cultural background of our members but there was a noticeable lack of women's voices (consistent with a general lack of women's voices in education research and policy generally—Bailey & Graves, 2016; Galman & Mallozzi, 2012), excepting those on early childhood teaching matters, under representation from schools beyond the Catholic sector and often silence from the primary sector (where fewer men work). This is not a problem unique to the IEU, for many groups of workers comprised mainly of women often lack voice and representation, but it is a significant challenge—how does one encourage the voices of women in a culture that, in practice, has not listened to them? Further, how does one encourage voice from schools beyond the Catholic sector, where the IEU typically had less success in recruiting members?

There is also a group of teachers in the membership who faced risk of termination if they spoke out. A person of the LGBTQI+ community, or even a visible ally of the community, at time of writing lacks protection from termination by a religious institution acting as an employer under anti-discrimination law and the listed exemptions (Albeck-Ripka, 2018; Karp, 2018; Vincent & Kewley, 2021). As the union representing these members, it meant that we had a responsibility to not endanger their current employment or future employability by placing an LBGTQI+ member in a forum where they could be identified, and their employer could be informed. This, regrettably, meant that the IEU lacked voices from this group and its allies on issues pertaining to the education and well-being of LBGTQI+ students (whom do have protection in any school in NSW), and it also silenced the voices of these members when it came to their own diminished rights as employees in Australia.

3 Employment Conditional to Silence

While the LGBTQI+ members of the IEU lacked protection under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*, universally, teachers often face employment ramifications for their act of exercising voice. Teachers in government schools are public servants by extension and the High Court of Australia (HCA) recently ruled that these employees do not have a protected freedom of speech in *Comcare v Banerji* (2018) HCA 23. The judgement rested on the existence of an employer Code of Conduct which called for employees to uphold the "values", "integrity" and "good reputation" of the employer (HCA, 2019). The judgement sent a shockwave through many areas of public service, but it also silenced many teachers in the government sector who may have been critical of the Department of Education and Training previously, or at least questioned its education policies, processes and teaching methodologies.

In 2016, several teachers and doctors made unauthorised public statements about the conditions of children held in detention on Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island by the Australian Government as they were processed regarding their refugee rights or asylum seeking claims. The teachers involved risked prosecution for breaking the secrecy provision of the *Border Force Act (Cth)*, but their commitment to their duty of care to children overrode their personal need for legal safety and they spoke out (Farrell et al., 2016; Farrell & Wall, 2016). Health professionals were later excluded from the provision (Hall, 2016), but teachers were not. That teachers were not included in this change speaks to the lack of seriousness that their professional needs are given by lawmakers. It was a chilling warning to all teachers that speaking out, even when it was in accordance with a professional requirement and an ethically clear action to take, was employability wise quite dangerous.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) includes Standard Descriptor 7.1 at Proficient level (the mandatory level required for ongoing teacher registration in Australia). The Descriptor reads 'Meet code of ethics and conduct established by regulatory authorities, systems and schools' (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011, p. 22). 7.2 Proficient states 'Understand the implications of and comply with relevant legislative, administrative, organisational and professional requirements, policies and processes' (AITSL, 2011, p. 22). When written, it was likely envisaged that Standard descriptors would be used in positive ways to uphold the profession of teaching, with little consideration given to the ways they could be applied industrially to a teacher's employment and/or registration. The sweeping breadth of the statements, purposefully vague, mean that employers and teacher registration bodies could write codes of conduct that include 'no talking' provisions, in practice only applied if the body took offence to what the teacher said.

An example is the Australian Capital Territory's Teacher Quality Institute's (ACT TQI) *Code of Professional Practice and Conduct*, which includes the three elements of 'integrity – personal and professional integrity', 'respect – respect for others' and 'responsibility – acceptance of responsibility for our contribution to the professional and through it to the community' (TQI, n.d.). Under integrity, the TQI expands to say, 'We demonstrate integrity by…maintaining standards of professional and personal conduct consistent with community expectations and complying with this Code and other professional codes' and under responsibility it nebulously states, 'We demonstrate responsibility by…behaving at all times lawfully, courteously and in ways that enhance the standing of the teaching profession'. The vagueness of the statements is where the danger lies—it seems like this should mean that teachers conduct themselves accordingly while on duty as teachers, but it implies that if teachers have a professional qualm with a mandated thing, for example, the implementation of NAPLAN standardised testing, then that might be considered as contrary to 'community expectations' or 'the standing of the teaching profession'. If a teacher expresses their discomfort with NAPLAN, to continue the example, in the manner of an offhand, exasperated foul language Tweet, is this 'courteous' behaviour and is the idea of a teacher swearing 'consistent with community expectations'? Similarly, does a teacher who publicly expresses frustration with the discrepancies between state/territory and federal policies within the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) breach the Standards, or does one who questions the efficacy of online schooling for additional needs students during COVID-19 lockdowns bring the professional into disrepute?

Teachers are in a tough spot—do they continue to practice their duty of care to children, explore new ideas in education theory and practice and challenge dominant discourse in education policy and implementation, or do they do what their employer tells them? For if a teacher is let go due to a breach of the Standards, the employer must tell the teacher registration body, which will make a note on their professional file and may even suspend/revoke their registration for a period of time, particularly if a court case has proven that a teacher broke a code of conduct, contract or law as in the case of the *Border Force Act*.

What is the tenor, then, of teacher voice? If so restricted by laws, codes of conduct and concerns about future employability, how can a union ask its members to speak out about practice, policy and theory? What were the ways in which we could safely elicit and collect their true, practice informed ideas and thoughts, and what was the union's role in protecting the member, collating those thoughts and representing them? Simultaneously, how could we find and locate unique voices who were representative of diverse communities and offer them training and opportunities to speak as themselves publicly? For while we were aware that at times the union would need to speak on behalf of the teacher members on controversial topics which could affect their employment/future employability, there were 'safe' topics to which teachers could comfortably speak which their employers would be pleased.

4 Creating Teacher Voice and Agency

It is a complex time for teacher voice and agency worldwide. One of the few professions that is traditionally well unionised, it has often sat uncomfortably between a trade and profession in the way governments, the media and the public has talked about it and not to it (Frostenson, 2015). In some countries, teacher unionism is holding strong and is often one of the few union movements to be retaining or growing membership, and in other countries unionism is facing increasingly restrictive operating modes and even lack the right to collective bargaining (e.g. South Carolina and North Carolina in the United States). The question as to whether teachers even have workers' rights has an impact on the confidence they have to speak further. Bottery and Wright (2000) suggest that 'teachers need to feel that they are part of an empowering professionalism, in which their work has an effect on the abilities of students, and where they play a valuable role in shaping the direction of future society'. This idea was important to the IEU as it developed its approach—how can we make teachers feel valued, and that they have an effect?

The answer we reached across all these challenges was to redesign the IEU's professional development programme. The wording of 'professional development' was purposefully selected to sound innocuous, non-challenging and almost cheerfully helpful—for what employer or registration body could object to opportunities for teachers to meet up and talk about professional practice? At its core, the programme would be faithfully that—a well-crafted professional development programme which would give all participants a chance to learn something new, consider its applicability to their students in their context and prompt reflection on their practice and what changes they could make to it. Altruistically, the programme would do that for all participants—it was the primary objective. A secondary objective, however, was to find likely voices from within the membership through this new pathway of interaction with the union. We were specifically looking for voices that had not been heard before, ones from minority communities, and from diverse genders and ages.

The IEU committed to a period of experimentation with its professional development (PD) programme. Into the ongoing programme Dr Keith Heggart, Marie-Claude Guilbault and I would insert specifically crafted member engagement opportunities. The four programmes were TeachMeets, a Young Members Initiative, Education

Debates and the Book Club. Each was calibrated in a slightly different way to seek particular groups of members, and each brought its own challenges and different successes. Importantly, we were prepared to fail in any or all these programmes, but we were committed to attempting multiple events within each category, working specifically to fix implementation problems with the hopes of increasing rates of success over time. We were cognisant that there was a significant culture build involved in this work too, as we were seeking not only to implement four different types of PD, but to engage quiet members and meaningfully sustain their engagement with a union from which they were used to receiving information, not inputting into it.

The work described was planned in 2018 and took place largely within 2019. It would prove to be one of the most challenging, exciting and productive periods of activity. The remainder of the chapter will be part narrative and part analysis of the strategies we tried, often without research references as we were truly experimenting to see what might work, what could be engaging and what results were produced. The way we changed event structures between instances of implementation meant we weren't truly collecting data that could be analysed rigorously (our intention was not to invite academic analysis but to encourage a cultural change), but the results achieved were interesting and encouraging.

5 IEU's 2019 Professional Development Programme

In this section, I will outline the four experimental programmes (TeachMeets, a Young Members Initiative, Education Debates and the Book Club) run alongside the IEU's usual professional development programme, which had been in existence since 2010. In 2018, the programme consisted of roughly two online events a school week held via Adobe Connect where up to 100 participants from around New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory met to hear from experts, text chat to each other and answer questions/offer ideas for particularly teaching strategies/policy implementation ideas. At times, NSW/ACT members were joined by members in affiliate unions from South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland.

By 2019, the membership of NSW/ACT, as well as guests from other states in Australia, were used to the online format the IEU had crafted of using an online host to introduce and provide hospitality to the members, plus a topic speaker who would present the content, with ongoing chat and activities happening on screen simultaneously to keep the engagement of participants high. Etiquette and technical difficulties were rarely a problem as the membership was well used to the rhythm of sessions and the technologies involved. This is an important consideration, as we did not take the membership from zero skills/engagement to seeking their voice in one step—the preparatory work had been done between 2016 and 2018 (most intensely in the last year). In a COVID-19 world where we are now well used to online meeting technologies, the process of onboarding members to a programme and etiquette structure may seem trivial, but it was a process of many years' hard, thoughtful and purposeful work for the IEU to take its membership from zero online engagement to enthusiastic chattiness between members and the union.

In selecting union members who would be involved in the activities below, we were mindful to actively seek marginalised voices of peoples of colour, diverse genders and sexualities, multiple religious groups, peoples with additional needs (who may not be able to attend in person events), those with family care responsibilities (who may be caring for someone and participating simultaneously) and the geographically isolated (including rural and regional members in ACT and NSW but also those isolated within Sydney's vast and difficult to commute metropolis). In providing opportunities for development of voice, we wanted to be sure that we weren't amplifying only one segment of society or perpetuating an existing cultural barrier.

To find these diverse voices, we used different approaches specific to each programme.

5.1 Programme 1—TeachMeets

The IEU TeachMeets structure was based on innovative professional learning design by several Australian-based teachers including Matthew Esterman and Simon Harper, and based on a Scottish idea for informal, quick professional discussion between teachers (TeachMeet NSW, n.d.).

The general structure of an IEU TeachMeet is that a topic for discussion is advertised and speakers will volunteer to speak for a 7 minute period. The IEU would work with the presenters beforehand as they developed their presentation, including assisting with feedback as to structure and PowerPoint (if used). A practice session with each presenter was organised, for twin reasons—to ensure there were no technical problems preventing their presentation going ahead on the night, but also to coach the presenter on their pacing, technique and build their confidence. This gentle coaching was an integral part of building their voice, as often the members were first time presenters in any public forum.

On the night of the event, the evening was introduced by the host who would act as master of ceremony (MC) thereafter. Four presentations by members would occur, followed by a panel session with the four members and the MC where participants would ask questions and the panellists would answer questions. The event was hosted in a manner that left no volunteer presenter hanging on a difficult question, although they were given a chance to answer them. The importance was placed on collegial, positive engagement strategies that would build a presenter's confidence ensuring that it was a beneficial experience for them, the participants and for the growth of knowledge between all.

While the presenters engaged in the two-fold process of engaging the members (i.e. presenting to them and then answering their questions), IEU staff were looking for specific characters within the presenters—experience informed teaching strategies, the ability to communicate these in an engaging and warm manner, the narrative ability to take participants on a clear and useful learning journey, and the ability to answer questions well and with inclusive language. Importantly, we were also looking for the way they engaged with other voices—that is, were they respectful, considerate and allowing diverse speakers their time?

The first TeachMeet we ran was a starting point, and we had to, admittedly, tap a few members on the shoulder to ask them to present. However, at the end of this first session we advertised the second and encouraged people in the moment to volunteer by either staying back online or emailing an IEU organiser directly. We followed this with social media posts on Facebook and Twitter, and two emails out to all previous participants in IEU PD. It worked—we had volunteers immediately, drawn in by the friendly atmosphere and the clarity of what was expected of them.

When we had more volunteer names, we were careful to choose people from diverse backgrounds, which we defined in this case as teaching at schools/early childhood centres beyond the Catholic system. We purposefully looked at age groups to ensure there was a spectrum being represented, rather than the usual 50-year-old plus group that typically volunteered for IEU events. Geographical placement of speakers was considered, with an attempt to even up representation from both regional areas and metropolitan. Finally, we considered their submission paragraphs as to the topics they wanted to address at the TeachMeet, looking to specifically include marginalised student groups, unusual teaching strategies/policy implementation and challenging behaviour topics. Of course, no action was taken to exclude teachers from our most prolific area of volunteers (male, Catholic systemic high school teachers), but concerted effort was taken to include those from outside that demographic.

The following TeachMeets began to showcase members that the IEU had not heard from much. These were the passive members, the silent ones who supported the union but often did not engage in its discussions. The faces and voices on screen grew more diverse with each subsequent event, and members would say that they volunteered because they had a friend who had done it and found it to be a positive experience, or because, importantly, they saw someone that looked like them on screen and thought that the union was receptive to their voice too. In short: if you make the space for more voices and actively seek to support them in speaking, they will come, and it won't take long.

We encouraged members to join specific Facebook groups of interest where they could continue the conversation between like-minded members. The team started a spreadsheet where we noted the speakers and their topics of interest. When opportunities arose such as the need for a writer in a publication (either an internal IEU publication or with an external journalist), the team nominated speakers from within the group we were coaching. Publications by lines and photographs began to look a little more diverse, younger and evenly spread across the genders.

In this way, we took a series of professional development events and used them to find, coach and encourage members to gain, hone and speak their voices in increasingly more public arenas. The added benefit was that it was always enjoyable—for the members and staff alike. These were easily replicable, a little labour intensive but thoroughly motivating and substantially result worthy events that lead to immediate voice growth. It was also a reminder to the membership that the union is a collective voice that supports and grows all members, and that the union was receptive to hearing from all.

5.2 Programme 2—Young Members Initiative

The Young Members Initiative was a small, targeted programme operated on an invitation basis. The IEU team would identify a member under 40 years of age who had impressed them with their knowledge, ideas, courage or collective spirit and thinking. They need not have done anything in particular to gain an invitation—this was a place for people who may have had only one interaction with the union so far but had said/done something that indicated they would have capacity as future leaders. This statement is nebulous—as a writer I acknowledge that—but it truly might have been something as simple as the member saying, 'I saw XYZ happen and it wasn't right – no one should be treated that way'. This sort of sentiment was enough to see a potential union activist, and the act of talking to the union at all was considered their first exercise of voice.

The Initiative ran from a closed and private Facebook group. Upon selection, members were emailed/called and asked if they want to join, and upon deciding to, they were added to the Facebook group. They were introduced to others in there, who would welcome them and begin chatting.

The purpose of the group was to build the skills of the age group to engage in policy discussions at state and federal levels (Ellison et al., 2018). The IEU was aware of its ageing demographic and its need to build younger members' capacity to read, understand and respond to policy. The need was specific—the IEU needed to ensure that its future leaders were informed and experienced policy negotiators.

The programme started simply—the members of the Initiative would have access to a series of specific professional development events regarding education policy response writing. These were free and offered synchronously online. Before the session the participants received a copy of a draft policy document the state or federal government had produced, or one of their agencies, e.g. NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) or AITSL. They would also be provided with the old policy the new draft sought to replace. An email would explain the background, the reason the government/agency sought changes and gave a list of specific things to look at within the document. On the night of the PD, the presenter was an IEU policy expert (quite often me) who would speak to the policy, the changes and then ask the participants what they thought.

The benefits were two-fold—as the person who would write the draft response for the IEU, I was hearing directly from the voices of the teachers the policy would impact for the majority of their careers. It gave me a chance to understand their varying contexts, and to ask questions to which they knew the answers about practice and implementation, rather than me writing from a series of suppositions on teachers' behalf (informed suppositions, yes, but it could not be escaped that I was not currently a practising teacher). The other benefits were for the participants. They practiced using policy words precisely, with gentle redirections and corrections from an experienced policy person when their phrasing or words weren't specific or accurate enough. They were also able to test ideas with a policy person, who could say why or why not the ideas would work, talking to other policies and legislation, or just from a larger viewpoint that saw implications across school systems beyond a members' specific school context. They benefited from the policy person's experience and precision of language and thought, and the policy person was challenged in their thinking and forced to justify or even change positions when confronted with fresh ideas.

The group's efforts led to seven responses to government agency policy drafts. Several members tried writing paragraphs for the submissions which were workshopped with feedback from the policy person and then included in the union's official response. They were practising important written skills in a disciplinary language not required in their jobs in schools. Their voices, unique and context driven, were being honed into clear, unapologetic, unrelenting advocates for their profession, professional needs and professional stances.

In addition to this, members were offered the opportunity to observe union branch and council events, so that they could see the way unions were run. As democratic structures, unions have visible processes for elections and clear constitutions for how things are run, but often these aren't made clear to younger generation members. It is mystifying to them, obscured by tradition and the feeling that the people who go to union events have known each other for thirty plus years, which is many more years than most young members have been alive. The purpose of opening the events to observation by the younger members was simply show them that it was a room full of people thinking about issues upon which young people also had valid viewpoints, and to expose them to the procedures, ceremonial language and diplomacy of councillors and branch representatives of the union.

Following this, several nominated for and succeeded in becoming branch representatives, some moving on to become councillors. Four nominated for executive council positions and three succeeded. The voice of the structures that ran the union were now including a younger demographic than before, and, importantly, the three that succeeded were women. The ratio of men to women at the top end of the union shifted to look more like the ratio of gender in general membership. Voices were being represented.

5.3 Programme 3—Education Debates

The education debates were designed to be events that showcased a teacher's voice and practice in contrast to an academic's research. The topics might be on issues of practice or about the philosophies behind teaching itself. Through trial and error, it was decided that the term 'debate' wasn't conducive as often the teacher practitioner and researcher weren't in opposition regarding theory or practice but simply delighted to have a conversation about what each was doing. A new name, however, wasn't allocated because the programme ended due to a staffing cut, a regrettable loss as it had been extremely effective.

An individual event was run in person and online simultaneously, in effect live streamed to an online audience similar to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) *Q&A*. A host introduced the topic and the speakers, and they would each be given time to introduce their topics, time to respond to what each other presented, and then it was over to the audience for questions from both in the room and online.

From the audience, the IEU identified future speakers in the debates, but also for TeachMeets, the Young Members' Initiative and the Book Club. The interesting thing was, however, is that the debates more than any other PD event drew an entirely new segment of the union membership in to the union building for the very first time. Among the practising teachers were bureaucrats, policy officers and executive from regional school offices and NESA. There was also a surprise group of attendees—teachers from the quiet union schools, the schools whose membership was smaller because their conditions were largely amply rewarded and weren't typically hot spots of union activism or dispute. A new voice was emerging through these events—teacher members in unusual positions, different from the usual vocal demographic in a way that surprised our team. And while it might not have been a sought-after result, it was a deeply appreciated one because this was the first time many of these members had spoken to the union as well, and their voices were also important to the IEU.

5.4 Programme 4—Book Clubs

The book club was probably the easiest of the programmes to run due to the sheer enthusiasm that members had for it. They were excited about the idea of independently reading academic texts on teaching and getting together to discuss it.

The book club started with one event where we hosted a chat with an author regarding their text. Although the event went well, the team re-wrote the structure of the book club afterwards as we thought it could be more effective than it had been as a pure 'meet the author' event.

The second iteration involved a meet the author online event at the beginning of a school term. This was where the book was introduced, the author talked about their reasonings for writing it, and then we called for volunteers to read the book and come back for a second online meeting in the last week of term to talk about what they thought about the ideas/techniques presented within it.

Enthusiasm for the book club multiplied. The IEU bought five copies of each book and distributed it to volunteers who agreed to speak at a second event about the book for five minutes about how the text impacted (or didn't!) their practice. They could use a PowerPoint to present if they wanted, a bit like the TeachMeet. They would then join a panel where they helped answer participants' reactions/questions in the chat window. Typically, we'd lose one or two presenters over the term, but the second book club meeting ran well enough with three points of view on the text (plus participants).

The effect the book club had on the morale of the participating membership was uplifting. Whether it was the unthreatening nature of the terminology of a 'book club', the shared joy in reading and discussion, or just the sense that this was a place for colleagues who were friendly rather than a serious union professional development event is unknown to me and wasn't surveyed at the time, but it seemed that these events were just seen as more accessible. Members who didn't feel confident enough that their voice was 'good enough' for a TeachMeet or Education Debate, did feel that they could contribute to reading a book and chatting about it in relation to themselves. This, then, was where we found another group of voices—the shy professionals who didn't see themselves (yet) as the union did, that is as valuable, reflective and welcome contributors to the collective voice of the union. The book club's job, therefore, with its affable and developmental host Dr Keith Heggart found and nourished a whole other grouping of voices. From these, we built them either as reviewers of books for the union's publications, future book club presenters, TeachMeet presenters, Education debaters or even Young Members Initiative members.

6 What We Learned About Creating Space for Teacher Voice

Through trial and error, a spirit of experimentation and a willingness to simply try, our team discovered many things, most of which were positive.

- That creating opportunities for voice development needs strategic planning and mindful implementation. Our team, although small, were extremely experienced event coordinators, hosts and technicians across multiple media, programmes and instruments. We had an effective and tight project management system that allowed for few mistakes and errors. All of us could operate well across camera, lighting, sound and live streaming technology. Each event required three of us being completely focused and able to take over at a moment's notice, which happened on occasion due to medical emergencies or presenters not showing up on time. Without these rounded, well-honed skills, as well as the team's capacity to operate without ego tripping each other up, the members would not have experienced a seamless series of events that left them feeling like there was space for their voices, and that everyone running the event was calm enough to hear them.
- These opportunities to elicit voice need not be cost prohibitive nor elaborate. Once the technology is bought/subscribed to, these events don't have massive overheads apart from a commitment to staffing them with experts.
- It is the responsibility of the organiser of an event to seek and encourage diverse voices, and to balance programmes so that they are inclusive of a range of speakers and don't prioritise one group or message over another.

- If you give teachers the opportunity to speak, they will take it. Although shy at first, if the experience is fun, supportive and inclusive, more will volunteer the second time. A single event should not be indicative of success or failure, and instead organisers must hold steady through a series of events until a culture of safety is built, encouraging others to volunteer their voices.
- Professional development can be used to interest teachers, and to bring them to the conversation, and within those experiences you can identify dialogues they are having, voices that are speaking up to represent a group's point of view and identify potential activists.
- Once engaged, teachers will rapidly build their voices, and both seek and take opportunities to express them in the wider public sphere.
- If empowered by knowledge of how policy documents are negotiated and written, teachers will use their voices to lobby government bodies for change. They just need to know the format so that they can contribute in a meaningful manner and with confidence that their voice is useful, productive and taken seriously.
- If empowered, teachers will stand for election in key representative bodies, become the voice of many of their colleagues and be change makers.

7 Conclusion

My final thought is about the challenges our team faced within the IEU to this programme. Resistance to new voices comes mostly from the established voices in the space. Unfortunately, most of the scepticism and negative reactions to the four programmes above came from union employees and already elected members. It wasn't most of the employees or the elected, but it was noticeable that the resistance came from this area. With hindsight, it's not surprising that the people who would be disquieted by new voices arising would be those that are already in power. It might have felt like a criticism of their efforts, or perhaps that their voices were being superseded by others.

My personal view is that when one looks to create opportunity for diverse, under-represented groups to gain power, one must share power for others to have it, which is an uncomfortable feeling if one has always been in power. An alternative way to express this is that if you want to hear voices from diverse communities, from teachers who are practising, then one must be quiet long enough to listen, and to remain quiet while they explain it again and exercise their new power. Voice isn't just about speaking; it is about knowing how to respectfully listen.

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Raising Teachers' Voices: How Teacher Unions Build Grassroots Intellectualism to Resist Neoliberal Education Reform

Mihajla Gavin

Abstract Neoliberal policy agendas in education have threatened to undermine the democratic foundations of public schooling and weaken education unions as the democratic organisations representing teachers' collective interests. While scholarship is growing around understanding the implications of neoliberal reform on teachers' work and pedagogy, surprisingly little attention has been afforded to understanding how teacher unions globally may influence, and potentially resist, neoliberal agendas. In a case study of union renewal, this chapter examines innovative strategies of internal revitalisation and organising deployed by the NSW Teachers' Federation—the teacher union in the Australian state with the largest teaching body—over recent decades to foster grassroots activism, engage a new generation of activist teachers and empower teachers to resist neoliberalism. In doing so, I examine how a democratically-led organisation has successfully fostered 'grassroots intellectualism' within its teacher-members through various renewal strategies to actively resist neoliberal ideas in education and inspire action towards a more democratic future.

1 Introduction

Over the last 40 years, school education at a global level has been transformed under the neoliberal, marketised agendas of successive governments. To address perceived decline in teaching quality and standards, education systems have been opened up to increased privatisation and marketisation. The imposition of externally-determined standards and shaping of pedagogy by education 'experts' serve to harness control over what teachers teach and how they carry out their work (Bascia & Stevenson, 2017). Meanwhile the demands on teachers are increasing. Intensification of teachers' work under devolved and competitive models has resulted in burnout and unprecedented levels of attrition from the teaching profession (Fitzgerald et al., 2019). At a system level, neoliberal hegemony has also undermined the democratic foundations

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K. Heggart and S. Kolber (eds.), *Empowering Teachers and Democratising Schooling*,
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of schooling, reducing education to an individualised product to be bought and sold, rather than conceptualised as a collective public good.

Discourse on education reform often overlooks the important role played by teacher unions in resisting neoliberal policy agendas to defend teachers' interests and act as the collective voice of the teaching profession (Carter et al., 2010; Gavin, 2019a). Despite working in a political and regulatory environment characterised by privatisation, New Public Management ideals, fiscally conservative governments, declining union legitimacy and restrictions on union activity, teacher unions have retained remarkably high levels of membership and strength (Carter et al., 2010; Kelly, 2015). Understanding how teacher unions have developed an activist, empowered membership and built a sense of 'grassroots intellectualism' is important as part of broader discourse around revitalising the declining labour movement (Murray, 2017).

To better understand how teacher unions attempt to resist neoliberal ideas, this chapter examines the case of the NSW Teachers' Federation (NSWTF)—the teacher union representing the largest teaching body in Australia's most populous state, New South Wales (NSW)—which has retained membership above 80% since its founding over 100 years ago. Drawing on insights from a study of teacher union renewal covering a 35-year period, it examines innovative strategies of internal revitalisation deployed by the union to articulate the collective voice of the teaching profession within a neoliberal climate. In doing so, it examines how a democratically-led organisation has successfully built organisational capacity and empowered 'grassroots intellectuals' (Gramsci, 1971) to actively resist neoliberal ideas in education that threaten education as a public good. Fuller coverage of the study findings are found in my unpublished doctoral thesis (Gavin, 2019a).

The first part of this chapter sets the context for examining teacher union responses to neoliberal agendas, then considers existing literature on teacher union renewal strategies. After detailing the methodology of the study, it presents data on the revitalised recruitment and engagement strategies of the NSWTF over recent decades. It concludes with discussion of the success of these strategies for empowering teachers, building grassroots intellectualism and challenging the neoliberalisation of education.

2 Teacher Unions Resisting Neoliberalism

Public education systems globally are under attack, undermining the heart of education as a publicly-provided democratic service. Our fundamental sense of democratic education has been problematised by the 'neoliberalisation' of education where policy agendas have reoriented the public understanding and purpose of free, democratic and participatory education (Ball & Youdell, 2007; Reid, 2019). According to David Harvey, neoliberalism is

> a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (2005, p. 2)

Neoliberal ideas first emerged in Australian education under the 'New Right' agenda of the national Hawke Government, born out of the policy ideas of the conservative Thatcher government in England during the 1980s and 1990s (Wilkins et al., 2019). Despite an agenda to promote free markets, neoliberalism requires an activist state to sustain market practices. Governing technologies of New Public Management have created conditions for a marketised education system, evident in the setting of performance standards and benchmarks, development of new assessment and data systems, and the design of sophisticated evaluation regimes (Reid, 2019; Wilkins et al., 2019).

While education scholars have produced a wealth of the literature critiquing neoliberal policy over the last two decades, relatively little is known about how teacher unions have responded to neoliberalising forces that threaten to undermine the democratic purpose of education. Teacher unions are important civic and economic associations that articulate teachers' collective and professional voice, safeguard teachers' conditions of work, and work to actively challenge the neoliberalisation of education (Hertel-Fernandez & Porter, 2020; Stevenson & Gilliland, 2015). Teacher unions are unique globally for having sustained high membership within a broadly declining labour movement.[1] Across major Western capitalist economies, teachers remain one of the most organised professions (Kelly, 2015). The NSWTF, for example, has retained strong membership levels since its founding over 100 years ago, currently sitting at 82% or 55,000 members (NSWTF, 2017, p. 20). This compares to a current union membership rate Australia-wide of 14% (ABS, 2020).

While teacher unions have not necessarily experienced the same nature or scale of difficulties faced by unions in other sectors, they have not been immune to falling membership and member participation, with a concomitant impact on power and influence. In essence, teacher unions cannot afford to remain defensive in the face of neoliberal threats and must provide an inspiring vision that challenges the neoliberalisation of education (Gavin, 2021; Stevenson & Gilliland, 2015). Policy and legislation, in Australia and worldwide, has attempted to weaken the influence of teacher unions. In NSW, legislation introduced a decade ago has capped increases in teachers' salaries; capacity to initiate protected industrial action has been restricted; and presenting 'work value' cases in the industrial tribunal to demonstrate complexity of teachers' work has been denied (Gavin, 2019b). In the USA, teacher unions have been consistently criticised for appearing to focus only on 'bread-and-butter issues' for teachers and failing to address issues around educational quality (Moe, 2011). Some states have also outlawed collective bargaining for public sector employees. Where it is allowed, governors in these states seek to exclude bargaining over issues of working conditions, hours and layoff procedures (Sanes & Schmitt, 2014).

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[1] Membership or density level is an insufficient, but widely used, indicator of trade union capacity or strength. It is also critical to consider member engagement and participation in union activities.

3 Union Renewal Strategies

In the light of these challenges, scholars, predominantly in the education studies field, have begun to examine the wider processes of renewal that teacher unions can engage in to develop as active, vibrant and engaging organisations capable of challenging the neoliberalisation of education (Bascia & Stevenson, 2017). Stevenson and Gilliland (2015) argue that teacher unions must become models of democracy that seek to promote and reflect social justice ideals. Crucially, this involves developing an organising culture in teacher unionism around collective values and empowering teachers as 'grassroots intellectuals' to amplify the voice of teachers and assert influence (Gramsci, 1971; Stevenson & Gilliland, 2015).

Scholars have proposed several renewal strategies to develop an organising culture in teacher unionism. One strategy is *organising teachers around ideas*. As argued by Stevenson and Gilliland (2015), teacher unions should strive towards developing a more holistic analysis of teachers' work and roles within schools, by understanding how teachers' industrial and professional interests, as well as broader policy issues, are linked. This involves engaging with issues in a wider political context and organising teachers around ideas in order to challenge neoliberal hegemonic discourse and re-assert the public, democratic purpose of education (Gavin, 2021). In practice, teacher unions can achieve this by actively engaging teachers as 'organisers of ideas' (Stevenson, 2008), or what Gramsci (1971) refers to as 'organic intellectuals', who develop and propagate the ideas that challenge dominant ideology. Gramsci's (1971) theories in this respect argue for capitalist power to be challenged by building a counter-hegemony and propose that this could be achieved by organic intellectuals and others within the working class developing alternative values and ideologies to the ruling class.

Complementary to this strategy is *developing vibrant union cultures* at the grassroots and workplace level. Bascia and Stevenson (2017) argue that a key challenge for teacher unions today is building active member engagement. With signs of an ageing membership profile, created by an ageing teaching profession, coupled with declining participation in union activities, there is a need to prioritise strategies for not only recruiting but also, importantly, engaging members (Bascia & Stevenson, 2017). As argued by Stevenson and Gilliland (2015), organising from the grassroots is crucial to ensure that teachers recognise that they *are* the union. Developing a vibrant union culture requires adopting an 'organising' model and building a sense of 'unionateness' among teachers, where teachers' professional identity as workers and identity as union members are viewed as indivisible. This can help assist in fostering loyalty and commitment within the profession and a sense of the union forming part of a teachers' identity, from which solidarity can be mobilised (Bascia & Stevenson, 2017).

Finally, there is evidence of *an evolving union approach focused around teacher professionalism* (Stevenson, 2008). While teacher unions continue to play their traditional union role of campaigning on industrially-focused issues, they are also professional associations which advocate on matters of professional concern for teachers

(Gavin, 2019b; Stevenson, 2008). While teacher unions have long advocated for 'professional issues', through the provision of professional development, unions are uniquely placed to engage teachers in the 'battle of ideas' surrounding contemporary education discourse, and make a connection between ideas and action, as informed by Gramsci's notion of the 'organic intellectual'. This evolving union approach has developed in a time of an 'apparent coalescing' of employer and teacher interests around the need for improved professional development opportunities aligned with an agenda on improving 'standards' (Stevenson, 2008). For example, in NSW, the *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning* policy introduced by the NSW Department of Education lays an agenda for improving teacher quality through enhancing the support and development of teachers. This uniquely positions teacher unions to also advocate for improved professional development opportunities for teachers (Stevenson, 2008).

4 Method

The data drawn upon in this chapter are sourced from a qualitative case study, conducted over 2015–2018, which examined teacher union responses to neoliberal education reform over the last 35 years in Australia. One area of this broader case study project focused on understanding how the NSWTF has built organisational capacity and engaged in internal revitalisation to build power and assert strategic influence within a neoliberal context. Two main data sources were drawn on: interviews and archival union documents. Seventy-one (71) semi-structured interviews were conducted with NSWTF officers (52), rank-and-file members (9), leaders of NSW principals' organisations (3), NSW Department of Education senior officials (3), former NSW Education Ministers (3) and the chair of a union-commissioned Inquiry (1). Given the focus of this chapter, most data is drawn from interviews with NSWTF officers. NSWTF officers were 'purposively sampled' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) based on their longevity of involvement in the union or capacity to comment on other aspects of union work examined in the larger project. Participants are distinguished by their position at the time of interviewing or prior to relinquishing their role (e.g. due to retirement). Interview themes reported in this chapter considered how the union has built greater organisational capacity through revitalising its approach to member recruitment and engagement over time and developing grassroots structures that foster engagement and activism.

In addition, over 2,600 archival documents of the NSWTF were analysed, ranging in date from the early 1980s to 2017. These records, which included annual reports, union minutes and union journal articles, provided unique insights into internal decision-making and strategies of the union. Data sources were analysed and coded with a constant comparative method using NVivo software. Tentative categories were formed during document analysis which informed the interview themes. Documents were re-analysed if new themes emerged during interviewing or existing themes needed refining.

5 Findings

This section outlines the renewal strategies deployed by the NSWTF in recent decades to recruit and engage the next generation of activist teachers, then evaluates the success of these strategies for building teachers' collective voice and creating 'grassroots intellectualism'.

5.1 The Changing Complexion of the Teaching Profession

Observation of an ageing teaching workforce in NSW acted as a catalyst for the NSWTF to revitalise its approach to recruitment and engagement in the early 2000s. Research undertaken by the NSWTF around this time forecasted that in the decade to follow 2004, up to 50% of the union's existing members would retire from the teaching profession (NSWTF, 2004a). This was supported by data released from the Audit Office of NSW in 2008, which showed that approximately 16,000 NSW state teachers would reach retirement age by 2012; this rate was estimated to increase to 25,000 by 2016—almost half of the state's teaching profession (NSWTF, 2009).

Meanwhile, a study commissioned by the NSWTF in the early 2000s highlighted that the union was operating in a dramatically changing recruitment context characterised by the expansion of private schooling, increased work intensification of teachers, growing levels of casualisation and temporary appointments and higher rates of attrition of early career teachers (NSWTF, 2004b). Significantly, while in the preceding three decades the union's membership comprised predominantly full-time, permanent teachers, a noticeable shift occurred in the early 2000s where, increasingly, temporary teachers formed a growing proportion of the union's membership. But despite this change in membership complexion, membership rates, overall, have remained steady over this period of time. The next section will outline the various challenges the NSWTF has faced in organising a new generation of teachers, followed by analysis of renewed strategies of recruitment and engagement deployed to foster 'grassroots intellectualism'.

5.2 Organising Within Changing Conditions for Unionism

This study sought to understand key challenges facing teacher unions in engaging a new generation of union activists. Participants commented on the difficulties that unions, including the NSWTF, face in attempting to 'manage a handover to a new generation with different mindsets [about unionism] and different views of what activism is' (Former Senior NSWTF Officer). While during the earlier era of 'preference for unionism' whereby unionism was enculturated in the teaching profession, the removal of this industrial feature in awards and agreements appeared to be a significant reason for younger teachers having a different disposition towards unionism (Former Organiser 1; Current Assistant General Secretary). Reflecting on the significance of preference for unionism clauses, a former NSWTF Assistant General Secretary described how: '[when] you started teaching, you joined the superannuation scheme, you joined the health fund, and you joined the union, and you were just active in the union' (Former Assistant General Secretary). Nowadays, the NSWTF could not enjoy the same 'luxury' (Former General Secretary 1) of having a 'ready-made' membership created through this industrial provision and needed to consider other recruitment and engagement strategies.

Participants also reflected on how the post-war 'baby boomer' generation of teachers appeared to have more collectivist attitudes brought on by the sociopolitical context of the 1960s and 1970s, while younger teachers, with limited experience of post-war struggles, more readily questioned collectivist ideals (Current Organiser 1; Former President 1). A senior leader of a NSW principals' association commented how 'for a lot of younger people, that commitment to the cause is not as deep. [It] doesn't mean it's not there…but the notion of being driven by a particular cause is less…I don't think that's as strong these days' (Current leader of principals' association 1). This sentiment reflects union socialisation research by Pogodzinski (2015) which highlights how younger teachers have significantly different beliefs about unionism and the relevance of unions in their lives.

There was also a perception that casual or temporary teachers could be 'reluctant' to support the union's activities in fear of appearing as a 'troublemaker' in their school and potentially affecting their future employment opportunities (Former NSWTF Officer). As commented by a current Organiser: 'I find that casuals and temps [temporary teachers] are reticent to be involved because they feel it will impact on their employment. They don't want to be seen as a troublemaker…they're not always going to be the one that will stand up and say we need to do something' (Current Organiser 2). While these views were expressed, it is noteworthy, however, as discussed in the following section, that the NSWTF has been successful in recruiting a new generation of teachers employed in a casual or temporary teaching capacity and maintaining high-membership levels in these employment categories.

Finally, there was also a sense that some teachers of a younger generation 'took for granted' the working conditions they currently enjoyed (Current Organiser 3; Current NSWTF Officer 1). There was observation from some participants that teachers today were entering into a 'stable' profession (Current Organiser 1) where there were less 'biting' issues (Current leader of principals' association 2) around basic working conditions and needs for students, which appeared to affect the profession more significantly in the 1970s and 1980s (Current Organiser 1; Current leader of principals' association 2). These attitudes of younger teachers reflects existing research about young workers more generally and their perception of unions. Laroche and Dufour-Poirier's (2017) research shows that while young workers are not necessarily against unionism, there is evidence that they have more limited knowledge of unions, hold more negative opinions of unions and perceive union services as somewhat irrelevant to them.

5.3 Recruiting the Next Generation of Teachers

The changing complexion of the teaching profession, coupled with changing sentiments around unionism, has required a renewed strategic approach to recruit the next generation of activist teachers. Ongoing recruitment was viewed as crucial by the union's leadership. As commented by the union's General Secretary at the time of interviewing, 'if you lose density you die, because you lose power'. In the early 2000s, the NSWTF developed a targeted campaign aimed at recruiting young and beginning teachers, particularly those employed in a casual or temporary basis, and tailoring programmes and services to this group (NSWTF, 2004a). Several initiatives formed part of this recruitment strategy including organising beginning teacher conferences, hosting graduate seminars, establishing a network to connect young activists, waiving membership fees for trainee teachers, offering trainee teacher scholarships, paying the accreditation fees of early career teachers and offering prizes as recruitment incentives (NSWTF, 2004a, 2005). Beginning teacher conferences, in particular, were perceived as a highly effective strategy to foster 'grassroots intellectualism' as prospective members could receive education about their rights and entitlements as teachers, network with other teachers, and learn more about union activism (Former General Secretary; Current Union Training Officer).

Creating recruitment officer positions was also viewed as a highly successful strategy for recruiting teachers over the last 15 years. Such officers are early career teachers employed by the union to visit schools and universities and promote the union's services (Current Assistant General Secretary). In 2016, the programme successfully recruited and/or updated the membership category of over 3,300 members, generating an annual recurrent income of over $1.3 million for the union that year (NSWTF, 2017, p. 72).

Another recruitment strategy has been offering 'multiple points of entry' (Former Deputy President) into the union by tailoring programmes and service offerings to the interests of early career teachers to 'broaden its appeal and its purpose' (Former Senior NSWTF Officer). Part of this has involved providing training and professional learning opportunities for teachers, reflecting *an evolving union approach focused around teacher professionalism* (Stevenson, 2008). Restructuring of the state Education Department over time, which has resulted in reduced professional support for teachers, saw the NSWTF respond by founding an in-house Centre for Professional Learning offering accredited professional development courses to NSWTF members (Current Union Training Officer). This has been accompanied by launching of the union's professional journal, the Journal of Professional Learning, to position the organisation as 'an intellectual and professional leader' (Former Senior NSWTF Officer). Members can both contribute to the journal as well as learn from leading experts in the field across various educational areas, thus contributing to their professional learning.

In this way, the union can serve the industrial interests and also the professional needs of members (Current General Secretary; Current Organiser 1). These initiatives around professional learning and development have thus enabled the union to develop member skills and capacities, as both professionals and activists. Providing professional learning and fostering 'unionateness' has enabled the union to align teachers' professional identity and identity as union activists and thus shape teachers' views of union legitimacy and general beliefs about unionism (Popiel, 2015).

5.4 Engaging the Next Generation of Teachers

A key challenge for teacher unions in resisting neoliberal influence is developing strategies that not only drive recruitment of new members but also support ongoing, active member engagement (Bascia & Stevenson, 2017). As articulated by a former NSWTF President: '[i]t's a hollow union that doesn't have its rank-and-file involved' (Former President 2). Underpinning this strategy is the need for an 'organising' model where member connection and engagement is central to building 'unionateness' among teachers from which solidarity can be forged (Bascia & Stevenson, 2017). Although the union has been successful in recruiting a different age and employment profile of teachers as explained above, an ongoing challenge is how to engage and socialise newer members, which is essential to increasing member commitment and participation in union activities (Fullager et al. 1995 cited in Pogodzinski, 2015).

A crucial engagement strategy has been fostering rapport and relationship-building within the union. Union Organisers interviewed in this study commented how having personal engagement with members, engaging in 'completely honest dealings' (Current NSWTF Officer 1) and presenting the 'human face' (Former Organiser 2) of the union was critical to trust-building. These practices also enabled Organisers to have an 'ear to the ground' (Current Organiser 1) on key issues facing teachers, as well as empathise with teachers' struggles (Former Organiser 3; Current Organiser 2; Current Organiser 1). This reinforces Popiel's (2015) idea that 'putting a face to the union' is key to member engagement, as well as commentary by Laroche and Dufour-Poirier (2017) about the importance of having local representatives that are visible and available.

Connected with these practices around engagement was also appealing ideologically to teachers and leveraging the caring ethos of teachers. As commented by a NSWTF Deputy President, 'People who come into the teaching profession have a…genuine sense of idealism and commitment, that sense of service to young people…Teachers care about the education and welfare of our students and the well-being of our communities and society and nation, and that translates into a very strong, committed union membership' (Current Deputy President). Hence, rather than using the 'big stick and scaring joining ethic of "you might need us someday"' (Current Organiser 1), there was a common view among Organisers interviewed of communicating instead to young teachers 'that it's their union' (Former Organiser 3) and encouraging a sense of collectivism and solidarity (Current Organiser 2). This ideologically-driven practice was also evident in emphasising the 'long game' (Current NSWTF Officer 1) of the union's commitment to delivering outcomes for teachers and 'trying to explain to young teachers…the reason that we've progressed so far' (Former Organiser 3). Johnson et al.'s (2009) research on teacher unions in the USA similarly shows how newer teachers are less aware of the hardships faced by previous generations to secure working conditions and that more senior teachers need to more actively communicate the goals and values of unions in a meaningful way to foster engagement.

5.5 Building 'Grassroots Intellectualism' Among Teacher-Members

Building 'grassroots intellectualism' was also crucial to engaging members and driving activism. This was driven by the union in a number of ways. First, it could be fostered through member education about neoliberal education reform elsewhere. Member education was encouraged by the union through various practices—funding overseas conference attendance, building alliances with national and international teacher unions, commissioning external research, supporting research through funding of a travel scholarship and disseminating a union journal (Former President 1; Former Deputy President). Such insights gathered from these activities needed to filter down to educate members about how global education reform could impact on teacher's daily work, and thus build grassroots intellectualism and feelings of solidarity (Former President 2; Current Organiser 4).

Second, 'grassroots intellectualism' could be developed by engaging members in social justice activism and concerns facing not only education but also society more broadly. This branding of the union as a 'social justice organisation' was formalised in the late 1990s through an Annual Conference resolution to position the NSWTF as a trade union interested in advancing social issues, where members could pursue social and political issues within the context of union work (NSWTF, 1999). This strategy helps to support member engagement. For instance, Popiel's (2015) study on teacher member activism found that perceptions of the union's moral legitimacy (views that the union's activities are of social value and benefit to society) greatly influences their beliefs about the union and level of activism.

Third, teacher-members could 'organise around ideas' through engaging in local activism in their communities. The NSWTF has one of the largest and most elaborate grassroots organising model of any union in Australia (Current Senior Union Official). The NSWTF Association structure comprises more than 160 member-based forums across NSW. At these forums, members come together regularly to discuss workplace issues and campaigns with their local Organiser. Such forums were seen by union officials as offering a sense of connectedness across the profession and the union (Former General Secretary 2). More recently, this organising function has also expanded to *within* schools where NSW public schools are encouraged to establish Workplace Committee comprising union delegates and activists to build the collective capacity of members to manage local workplace issues as well as engage the community in union activities (NSWTF, 2013). These local organising practices are a key strategy for building 'grassroots intellectualism' among teacher-members and fostering solidarity within the profession.

Finally, the NSWTF has also worked to 'organise around ideas' and foster a sense of the 'organic intellectual' within the teaching profession through its campaign work to resist hegemonic neoliberal ideas that have resulted in a lack of funding for public schooling and de-valuing of teachers' work. For example, in the Review of Funding for Schooling (the 'Gonski Review') launched by the Federal Labor Government in the early 2010's, the NSWTF framed its campaign message around delivering funding on the basis of student needs, dissolving old binary arguments of private versus public schooling, to organise around a caring ethos of the profession and also inspire parents and the community in the union's campaign for increased federal funding of public schooling (Gavin, 2021). More recently, in the Gallop Inquiry ('Valuing the teaching profession – an independent inquiry'), the NSWTF also commissioned an independent inquiry into the work of teachers and principals to understand how this work has changed over the last 15 years of neoliberal influence. Through drawing on the voices of academics, experts, school leaders and teachers, the Inquiry has provided a platform for the union to lobbying government about the need to address critical issues in public education, like unsustainable workloads and addressing the declining comparable salaries of teachers (NSWTF, 2021). Framing campaign messages in this way enables teachers to set the agenda for public education, articulate the voice of the profession and create a united front against neoliberal ideology.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

Unions globally are grappling with issues of legitimacy and declining power. While teacher unions have not suffered the fate experienced by other trade unions, there are various ideological challenges facing educators today which are attempting to erode the democratic foundations of education and dismantle the collective agency of teachers and the organisations that represent them. The role of unions in empowering teachers to resist neoliberal education reform has often been overlooked; a gap this chapter has attempted to address by examining how the NSWTF, through the lens of union renewal, has empowered teachers and unionists to work against the narrative of neoliberalism over the last two decades. While it has highlighted the enduring strength of the NSWTF, it has also brought attention to the imperative for trade union organisations to engage in continual revitalisation and continue to build 'grassroots intellectualism' within the profession to resist neoliberal ideology. As argued by Stevenson et al. (2020), at the heart of any union renewal process is a focus on the fundamental purpose of trade unionism. This requires demonstrating what unions are capable of doing when its members act collectively, as well as repositioning priorities around the pursuit of social justice, the struggle for economic and industrial democracy, and the collective means for workers to defend their human rights (Stevenson et al., 2020).

This chapter has highlighted the importance of teacher unions carrying out sustainable recruitment activities, characterised by grassroots organising combined with member engagement, to maintain union power. Teacher unions can develop capacity through building an activist membership base as well as establishing effective member education and communication practices to produce skilled, capable and educated 'grassroots intellectuals'. Developing an organising culture and acting collectively is important to build a strong, activist and representative union that can turn the tide of competition, marketisation and privatisation of education. This chapter has highlighted the complexity, however, of undertaking union activity in a changing economic, political and regulatory environment, and in engaging a new generation of workers with different interests, attitudes and expectations around unionism.

Significantly, it has emphasised the importance of not only recruiting new members, but building a sense of 'unionateness' and collectivism. Union instrumentality—the belief that unions are effective in improving workers' pay and working conditions—is an important but insufficient, motivation for workers to support unions; it is important that unions also emphasise 'prosocial' reasons for joining, including listening to members' concerns (Fiorito & Padavic, 2021). Tapping into the needs and interests of younger teachers and offering 'multiple points of entry' into the union, a strategy enacted by the NSWTF, is crucial. Likewise is socialisation and fostering 'unionateness' where teachers' identities as unionists and professionals are indivisible. As argued by Laroche and Dufour-Poirier (2017), education and training activities, in addition to professional development opportunities, are key renewal strategies as they help young members develop a sense of identity that can lead to higher levels of union participation and greater engagement and activism.

Finally, this chapter has also highlighted how building 'grassroots intellectualism' among teachers about neoliberal education reform is critical for union power and empowering teachers. This chapter has documented several examples of how the NSWTF has built 'grassroots intellectualism', including developing local organising forums as well as enhancing the voice of the profession in campaigning. As argued by Stevenson et al. (2020), neoliberalism's success, in part, has depended on the extent to which ideas and values associated with it have become normalised and taken for granted as 'common sense'. Teacher unions need to demonstrate that there are alternatives to dominant ideas and to actively organise and mobilise teachers around a more optimistic and hopeful vision of teaching (Gavin, 2021; Stevenson et al., 2020). This involves articulating and campaigning for a vision of quality public education based on the values and principles of democracy and social justice (Gavin, 2021; Reid, 2019; Stevenson et al., 2020). The challenge here, however, as articulated by Stevenson et al. (2020), is to persuade current and potential members that alternatives exist, and that change is only possible through working together, which, necessarily, involves trade union organisation.

Building organisational capacity is essential for strengthening union power in a neoliberal environment. While teacher unions work in different contexts, they share a similar experience in neoliberalism impacting teachers and their unions. The ideas presented in this chapter are not unique to an Australian context and, indeed, there is capacity for broad application of these strategies by teacher unions elsewhere.

Although teacher unions have strength to challenge education reform, this chapter has emphasised the complex environments in which teacher unions operate and the importance of fostering a sense of empowerment in teachers to protect and advance the conditions of one of the largest occupations in the world.

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Empowering Teachers: Deliberate Processes

This section brings the location and sites for struggle for teacher empowerment into sharp relief. Practising teachers outline the ways that classrooms, staff rooms and schools are being transformed by democratic, progressive approaches to teaching and educational leadership. We are suggesting that human, student and citizen-centric schools and classrooms should be the goal for empowered and informed educators, to produce students who can participate fully within our society. Using a mixture of theory and up-to-date case studies, the practicalities of these approaches are explored across different spaces.

Much education discussion completely avoids the topic of teaching. Discussions of research, theory and technology are abundant, but genuine reflection upon teaching within the four walls of a classroom are limited. This may be in part due to the way that teaching is viewed as politically threatening and challenging. Australia is a place where discussions of curriculum remain a ‘political football’ and obtuse elements of teaching such as phonics and early reading instruction being discussed at length within the public sphere.

We believe that the fullest realisation of teaching is a practice that fully embodies and reflects each teacher’s beliefs and worldview. This is what makes teaching a political act, actions like seeking equality of voice, across genders, classes or nationalities for example is the broad society writ small. These decisions and actions are difficult because teaching is complex, increasingly so, and because the nature of learning to teach is largely carried out by an apprenticeship of observation, including while as students. This tends to lead to replication of old habits and methods across generations of students and teachers, with Universities’ high theory mostly being discarded during the many pressures of early career teaching.

But surely, once within a school, teachers will be embraced and supported as professionals by their new peers? Sadly this is rarely the case, the nature of mentoring within schools is often viewed as an afterthought for many settings, leaving new teachers untethered within a difficult profession that only eases with experience. A lack of clear mentoring, that meets their needs and is able to tap into their pedagogical gifts and most importantly their ‘why’, sees many teachers leave the profession. These are but some of the more visible and acute issues that face new teachers.

What is outlined here, are a series of deliberate processes with the aim of injecting the art and craft of teaching back into the discussion of schools. These deliberate processes are aimed at countering the forces and challenges. Countering the deprofessionalising teachers' agenda within schools, by empowered leaders with a new vision for what it truly means to be a deeply aware and reflective practitioner.

Alex Wharton decries the lack of trust in teacher judgement and shows ways that teachers can empower themselves and one another to confidently take up this mantle of the professional. Noting that judgement and trust are core pillars that allow teacher flourishing and excellence, he outlines ways that teachers can steel themselves against the barrage of teacher bashing upon our profession.

Stephy Salazar takes us into her own experiences as a new teacher and the ways that she not only empowered herself, but by leveraging supportive people and organisations was able to quickly establish herself as a leader. She provides practical examples of how others can establish similar programmes so that we can establish numerous 'new teacher tribes'.

Ruth Smith and Lisa Starmer outline the approach taken within their setting to make professional development empowering. Using existing frameworks and policy strictures as jumping-off points, rather than as stumbling blocks, they show ways that teachers can discover their own excellence within the often overlooked and poorly researched area of in-school professional learning offerings.

Trusting Teacher Professional Judgement

Alex Wharton

Abstract Teacher judgement is the bedrock of professional practice and teachers' standing within the community. Within this chapter, readers are provided with a powerful snapshot of the way that teachers' voices are marginalised within wider educational discourse, either through the influence of other actors, the media, lobby groups or through specific policy decisions that 'crowd out' teachers' own voices. This chapter serves as a stirring call to action for teachers to develop their own voices and the voices of their colleagues in order to effect change in their professional standing. In order to do this, examples of the way that teacher voice has and is being promoted within existing networks are discussed. In reading this chapter, teachers are very much encouraged to reflect on their own experiences in promoting teachers' voices and how they can share what they have learned in their actions and in turn consider what this might mean for other fellow teachers. For the sake of our democratic society, teacher's voice should be heard. Teacher's voice deserves to be heard. The teacher's voice must be heard. And respecting teacher professional judgement is first step towards achieving this overall aim.

1 Introduction: Teacher Voice and Teacher Empowerment

The literary term 'Own Voices' was coined by European author Corinne Duyvis (Seattle Public Library, 2021). At the heart of this Own Voices movement is the concept of marginalised voices writing and sharing from what they know; that being, their own lived experience and perspective. There is great power and merit in this approach, due to the experience and authenticity that can be communicated. For too long, the voices and words of the marginalised, the underrepresented and the voiceless have been spoken for by others. This experience is true for educators, too. Consider the past and present rhetoric in education that is related to teachers and teaching: so much of that is formulated by people other than teachers, and often from people external to the field of education itself. To see, value and celebrate an

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'own voices' movement for educators means universally acknowledging that those in schools are experts and authorities regarding what happens within those spaces. It cannot and should not be the other way around; yet that is the situation that the education profession finds itself navigating today. This chapter draws on other marginalised voice social movements. The well-known slogan 'Nothing about us, without us' is pertinent for teachers, too. Historically, this particular slogan related to the disability sector (Charlton, 1998) but this messaging has, today, a relevance beyond that sector to all marginalised or excluded groups. One central feature of raising teachers' voices is through valuing, elevating and trusting teacher professional judgement. The ongoing erosion of this trust leaves little confidence in teachers that their voice is not only being heard, but also listened to and acted upon.

2 Trust, Status and the Teaching Profession

Tschannen-Moran (2014) have written about trust in schools; this research strikes to the very heart of this chapter's contention. The foundation of a teachers' work, in all aspects (students, parents, school leadership and peers) relies on trust. So much so, that global educational literature regards trust as the most important quality that exists in successful workplaces (Morrone, 2009). With trust, teams perform, individuals thrive and performance exceeds expectations. In contrast, the absence of trust is particularly damaging. Relationships can become destructive, communication breaks down and a negative intent is assumed in almost all contexts. Does such a situation sound familiar to in educational settings and environments in Australia? Of course it does. And trust has impacts upon teacher health and well-being, too. Troman (2000) connected teacher stress with a lack of trust. The lack of trust many teachers feel exposes a peculiar dichotomy in the education sector. Teachers describe their work with students through language such as agency, changemaking and autonomy. These terms are seen as being essential for success and performance—and for democratic citizenship, too! Yet those same terms are notably absent in professional discussions about teachers by leaders in schools: instead, the language used emphasises achievement, accountability and instruction.

There are inhibitors to trust, it must be said. One such inhibitor is the sheer size of the teaching workforce. Hundreds of thousands of teachers work within the largest states. It can be difficult to assign trust to such a diverse group. Certainly, the trust required is of a professional nature, rather than a personal one—but that often relies on the status of the profession—and no one equates teachers with the same level of status as doctors, for example. Due to the low status of the profession and the often thankless and humble nature of teachers' work, individual teachers have only limited individual agency; instead, they need to rely on collective action in order to effect improvements in working conditions and status.

This reliance on collective agency has had negative consequences, too. When coupled with the changing nature and demands of a teachers' work, education has become politicised—or at least, become even more so. The immediate effect of such cultural shifts reflect that the truth of a teacher's voice becomes more token than trusted—and indeed, sometimes the voices of teachers—for example, professional associations and unions—are presented as untrustworthy.

This undercurrent of distrust identified in this discourse must stop. If trust continues to be cited as the most valuable thing, both for schools and for all workplaces, then the value placed on teacher trust at both an individual and systemic and profession-wide level should be of the highest priority. Wide scale studies such as Harlen (2005) reinforces the need for this topic to be approached in a sensitive, careful and considered manner. More recent studies, such as that by Wyatt-Smith et al. (2010) recentre this discussion around the real need in maximising student learning outcomes and how supporting professional teacher judgement works to achieving this goal. In short, trust is essential for teachers—but even more than that, trusting teachers is essential for improving student outcomes.

3 Teacher Status and Respect

The International Labour Organisation's Report (2021) on the future of work reflects that on the whole, the teaching profession retains a high perception of social relevance, and it has in some contexts been identified as being a respected profession (ranked after engineering and medicine). However, this is not the case in Australia. This same report does go on to note that generally the higher the educational attainment of the individual, the more valuable teaching as a profession becomes. Applying this to the Australian context, it is not surprising that the teaching profession remains so unappealing for high school graduates. Some have suggested that we adopt an 'Australian Defence Force style' advertising campaign to grab the attention of the right candidates (Baker, 2021). The report states that 'Only 4 percent of 15-year olds surveyed by the OECD envisioned becoming a teacher. In many countries, teaching is seen as a low-status career of 'last resort' and lacks the status of professions such as law or medicine, largely due to low pay, slow pay progression and few opportunities for promotion' (International Labour Organisation, 2021, p. 32). This idea is also picked up in the profession-wide evaluation of perceptions relating to teaching by Heffernan et al. (2019) in an analysis that identified that the challenges (workload, well-being, professional perception) to attracting those to the profession need to be resolved now.

To gloss over the poor treatment of teachers by society, from the media and other inputs at large would be a gross misdemeanour. The poor image problem is a barrier to people and professionals choosing the teaching profession. It is important for teachers to feel respected in their work. Their ability to make use of expert, professional judgement is of the highest importance. Teachers who do not see evidence of respect should be encouraged to use their individual and collective voice to demand change, to petition legislators and to represent the views of their local communities. The role of the local community is particularly important. In community conversations, events and activities, teachers still hold a central figure. This is especially the case in rural and regional communities, where the position of school principal is still valued. In these settings, teachers need to listen well and understand the needs of the community. At other times, teachers will need to lift their voices and use them for advocacy purposes, to stand up and be counted.

In other settings, where community cohesion is perhaps not as strong, the collective representation of teachers is even more important. The platforms that exist currently that assist this initiative are important. They include groups like: professional associations (these range from subject specific, to cross-sectoral, special interest groups); union movements; and other collective groups. Teachers, on a daily basis, can find themselves having their autonomy challenged on a variety of levels (such as within schools or from the media). A collective voice and sense of purpose is essential in this discussion. It is also worth us as a nation considering what we can be learning from other countries' handling of teacher status and respect.

4 Teacher Professional Judgement

So what has led to this fraying of respect for teachers, and the concomitant decrease in valuing of teacher professional judgement? First, let us consider what is meant by professional judgement, and how it is exhibited in schools. The ways in which a teacher's professional judgement manifests itself in their work occurs on three main levels. The first is a teacher feeling that sense of trust and respect at a school level. This includes having positive relationships with line managers (e.g. Head of Department, Stage Coordinator). The trust that can be seen here can relate to accurate assessment or to planning and programming to meet the needs of all learners. Linked with this exploration at the school level are other aspects of school leadership including the Principal and/or Deputy Principal, who need to have the belief that their staff know what to do and how to do it.

The second level of trusting teacher judgement comes at a sector-wide level. This could be either in the conversation of Early Childhood, Primary or Secondary Teachers, or it could even be at the classification level of government and non-government schooling. Due to the unique nature of teachers operating in this space, there is a certain level of trust that is implied around this work and high-level engagement (professional learning, learning targets, initiatives, etc.).

The third and final level for trusting teacher professional judgement comes at the level of the whole profession, where the expectation of teachers being tertiary qualified professionals and that they are the experts and know how to do their jobs comes to the fore.

In all these three levels of teacher trust, the common fact that runs through the conversation is that teachers are professionals. Noticeably, the struggle for professional identity around teaching perhaps has not helped the cause and image of the important work that happens in classrooms on a daily basis, right around Australia and indeed the world. One example of this that rings out from the COVID-19 pandemic is the unclear identity of teachers seeing themselves as frontline/essential workers—schools remaining open at all times, staff working in face-to-face capacity to ensure consistency, and yet this did not translate to priority vaccine access. It cannot be emphasised enough that as the bureaucratisation of education and lack of clear recognition of teaching as a profession becomes louder, the voice of the teacher (across the school, sector and profession level) becomes softer. The findings of the Gallop Inquiry (NSW Teachers Federation, 2021) also speaks to the changing nature of teachers' work since 2004. In particular, the inquiry made a connection between pay, professionalism and teachers' work that reflects this disconnect between trust and teacher judgement.

Isolated judgement, free from models or accountability alone does not constitute professional judgement, it has to be shared and collective. Teachers know this, do this, and want to continue to do this. However, there are significant barriers in the way. The changing nature of the work of teachers, increased demands and changing political priorities have all had an impact. Instead of teachers being viewed as tertiary qualified experts in their fields, discussion of their work has been narrowed to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and accountability measures. Sources of insight have been limited to data inputs tracked against performance goals. These are, in turn, to funding. Everything else that takes place in schools—indeed, many of those things that make a school, a school—are less of a priority—or ignored entirely. Many teachers regularly explain that students learn best when they feel safe and supported. For teachers to do their best work, the necessary conditions are exactly the same. However, if the experience of the teacher is one that is not associated with trust in their work and a belief in the accuracy of their judgement, then the lack of respect also impacts upon their students. One can say with confidence that trusting and respecting teacher judgement is the key to a productive, satisfied and valued workforce. We need to establish schools that are a place where professionals feel and are genuinely 'heard'.

5 Teacher Voice and Impact

The concept of the reflective practitioner is one that flows through all pre-service teacher education courses. Teachers are brimming with great ideas, innovation, experience and expertise. Teachers are at the cutting edge within their own classrooms, with ideas worth spreading, but often there is no way for teachers to do this—and no time, either. This very much leads to the teacher's voice not only needing a space to be shared, but also the need to find the right forum in which this can be valued and even amplified. An important note: when we're discussing teacher voice, we're mindful that there are many different forms of teacher voice, including attendance at forums, union actions and stakeholder meetings, belonging and being active in professional associations. In short, we are using teacher voice to mean any form of advocacy that is in favour of teacher professional judgement and teacher status.

It should be noted that it's not that teachers aren't seeking to share their ideas and practice widely: there is an ocean of exciting teachers who are writing blogs, recording podcasts, producing videos, organising and speaking at Teach Meets and so many others. And this is not limited to online sharing either: consider the works and contributions of teachers through books, academic articles and conference papers. What is unique or key about these forums and formats? That they are teacher developed. And in what ways are these things different to the alternative of these activities? The difference is one of authenticity: there are too many external, non-teacher voices dictating what should happen in the teaching space.

This insensitivity happens on a daily basis; there are many examples of educational leaders and policy makers holding forth about what makes good education policy or practice—when they have never worked inside a classroom or school. The real problem here is that so many of these wonderful teacher-led blogs, articles and networks are overshadowed by the more dominant voices in education, meaning that the voices of teachers are drowned out by non-teachers.

This consideration naturally begs the question: how can we more intentionally, more richly, elevate the voices of teachers in wider educational discourse? There is also an irony, in that teachers who are sharing best practice through writing up their work to present, or authoring an article in a professional journal, most likely do so on top of a full time teaching load, after a six period day, where lunch was eaten on the run (if at all) and after a class set of corrections to mark. The teaching profession is one that is committed to enriching each other for the betterment of the wider educational landscape and in dialogue through their work. So much so, that not only are teachers characterised by doing an excellent job, but also going above and beyond is what allows the education system to continue in the fashion that it does—and this limits their capacity to speak up on their own behalf.

Of course, it would be unrealistic to present a situation which expects teachers to do it all, as much as some might wish to or try to. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) work on teacher attrition (2016) is quick to identify the flaws around teacher expectations which can lead to burnout and being overworked. Similarly, the findings of Weldon (2018) note that slowing early career teacher attrition is particularly important in seeking to develop a sustainable teaching workforce. A possible solution to this association of teacher performance and attrition is the fact that teachers need those in advocacy and bureaucracy roles to empower or be the voice of teachers. And in this same spirit, teachers need to trust that those in advocacy and bureaucracy roles will be the voice of themselves. Teachers need and want to be heard. And those in advocacy and bureaucracy roles need to have an attitude to listen. This is the way to move forward for all involved, protecting the future of our profession as well as giving voice to those with their own experiences and perspectives from the classroom. Discussion now turns to some of the ways that teachers might speak out and advocate for the profession amidst the broader policy landscape.

6 Teacher Autonomy in Practice

6.1 *Standardisation of Assessment*

An area of particular concern is the impact of standardised testing and assessment upon schools, children and teachers. Whilst the concerns about standardised testing have been well rehearsed in other settings, it is important to note that standardised testing functionally limits opportunities for teacher to develop and apply expert judgement. In a very real sense, these tests devalue teacher expertise. Such imposed processes, although well meaning, can actually undermine the work and judgement of teachers, fuelling negative societal concerns and reflections around teachers and their work. What this means in particular is that teachers do not feel the respect and support which is needed for their success and that of their students. The sense of teachers' agency in making judgement calls with regards to assessment is one such example of this.

6.2 *Curriculum Changes*

Teacher autonomy and agency feel as if they are oxymoronic ideals in our current reality. Consider the role of teacher autonomy and advocacy in a mandated curriculum. With curriculum reviews, reforms and re-writing comes with a period of consultation. However, for the busy teacher, often consultation windows are during term time or report writing season and involve an extensive survey with certain questions that stifle and strangle the teacher's voice or imagination to provide rich and meaningful feedback. In this respect, even the consultation within the curriculum change process is standardised, asking teachers' voices to be contained within a simple Likert scale response. Teachers in reality have limited voice and choice as to how they can approach learning in some classroom contexts due to the content heavy curriculum demands and requirements. Not so helpfully, meddling and influence from those outside the classroom, including the media, who are vying for their next headline and are interested in sacrificing the teacher profession on the altar of criticism and teacher bashing. This message in both an ongoing and sustained way, is quick to undermine the years and years of hard-working school teachers, schools themselves as well as entire sectors and workforces of the profession.

In an age of ongoing accountability, where tracking data and measuring student progress via this means is de rigueur, teachers can feel a lack of space for teacher autonomy and making their own judgement calls within their classrooms. Drawing on the bold reports like the Gallop Inquiry into the teaching profession (NSW Teachers Federation, 2021) provides an indication of what impact, vision, direction the teaching workforce and content would have in regards to this whole system transformation that is needed and well overdue.

Furthermore, those mourning the loss of talk around pedagogy being swapped for politics, note how education is so politicised in our contemporary Australian context and that this reflects a genuine struggle. The irony, again, is that those politicising education are the decision-makers, influencers, movers and shakers who do affect education with little to no school experience. These individuals and groups, bodies and corporations ultimately dictate the policies being implemented, the resources being used and assessments being deployed; in fact, everything from the standardised testing to teacher salaries, wider teacher policy and everything else in between. The references from Kolber (2021) of the 'Political football' of curriculum is a calling out Ill-informed policymakers who meddle unhelpfully in the core business of teachers is one such example of this change in rhetoric so badly needed. Indeed, teachers are rarely consulted about these decisions. Even when we are, it's often desultory or 'consultation-after-the-fact', for purely cosmetic reasons. In many cases teachers are even 'astroturfed' in, by selecting the most amicable and polite teachers to provide conciliatory commentary in line with the set policy. This is short-sighted: teachers are the ones who know the schools, the classrooms and their students. They know the implications of decisions—whoever makes them—and how this will affect daily teaching and learning for themselves, their colleagues, and more importantly, for the students. What we need is a culture where teachers are encouraged to use their collective voices, to call out, to sing, to demand action, pushing back against bad decisions and promoting the good ones. Teacher voice, choice, autonomy and agency—these are the traits that teachers are to employ and in doing so, will change the world.

In drawing out the discussion regarding teacher agency in curriculum reform some more, explicit judgement calls from the teacher regarding assessment and curriculum are rightly assumed. Think about the regular reform that happens at a school-based level involving the teacher on almost a daily basis; they willingly identify and process the constraining top-down influences from system-developed processes. Indeed, teachers must continue to advocate for support from school leaders, and more in-school professional development opportunities, to help strengthen the collective teachers' voice. In doing so, this will in turn allow teachers to exercise greater agency in their curriculum and assessment work, a core practice of their roles.

As alluded to earlier in this chapter, a question exists around the notion of teachers allowing high-stakes testing to kill teacher autonomy, drive and creativity. Is there a tension between the dream and vision of being an effective teacher and the reality of being pressured into teaching to a test? Such experiences constitute tens of thousands of teachers in the Australian workforce. The elevation of high-stakes testing places pressure on teachers, including through the government's role which increases this pressure and further negatively impacts upon teacher workload and performance, ultimately compromising quality teaching and learning. Teachers are certainly not against teaching and accountability, in fact this is something that all educators have a role to play in and all have something to contribute. Perhaps the issue shifts and the focus becomes more specific when the drive to perform shapes all aspects of the teacher's role and becomes the only thing that matters. A specific example of Australia's National Assessment Programme—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is one way in which the work of teachers can often be minimised. In regards to school manifestation, teachers in Term 1 may tend to only focus on two types of writing—imaginative and persuasive writing, as these two forms are part of this testing programme. The resultant narrow teaching approach is not just limited by teachers to writing however, but a whole range of units and lessons that can be adapted to fit within the NAPLAN focus, rather than teaching the regular curriculum which is, in and of itself, the best preparation a student can have for NAPLAN. The teacher does not want to go down this path, but does feel a certain level of being trapped into teaching to the test (Harlen, 2005). Such is the culture of schools and teachers, and unless there are intentional systematic approaches to free stakeholders of this impact, this is unlikely to change.

Another school-based forum which elevates the role, voice, choice and status of teacher professional judgement are Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (Stoll et al., 2006). This evidence-based approach to developing teacher capacity through inquiry and learning, it prizes teacher judgement as the core and most fundamental aspect of the PLC programme. The work, research and collaboration that is generated from a small staff team working together to learn more about a particular area of professional teaching practice cannot be underestimated in ultimately transforming student outcomes, as well as the teachers themselves.

6.3 Steeling Oneself Against the Silencing and the Bypassing

Teachers are frequently criticised, challenged and devalued (in both private and public settings), and yet what is so special about being a teacher is that we never lose our value. It is important for teachers to remind themselves of why it is that they do what they do. In my own practice, I have a folder in my email inbox entitled ‘Happy File’ which is filled with emails of thanks and reflections from students, parents and colleagues about the difference that has been made to their lives through my work. The times I return to this email folder are the times I am tempted to give up, the times I am discouraged by policymakers, or the times I see a media headline having a go at my hard-working colleagues. We regularly remind our early career teacher colleagues to be tough, and yet such words are not only for them, there are many challenges that face the experienced teacher also, discouragement and disillusionment among them. However, these lowest of times call for experienced teachers to press in, to be resilient and to maintain confidence. Such things we innately know how to do.

As already acknowledged in this chapter, teachers are reflective practitioners by both training and innate nature. Reflecting on the nature of our work can also help us as a profession strengthen our impact. For teachers to make valuable calls and contributions to the profession and society at large, the need for time to reflect is absolutely essential. Teachers innately have a desire to engage at a deeper level, this is what makes our profession unique more than any other in the world. As teaching and education is in the business of developing student lives through teaching and learning, the appropriate role and response to the work of a teacher should be at the forefront in educational discourse in the public space.

It is also important in this discussion for teachers to maintain their own voice. The ways in which this can be done are endless and will look different for each teacher, according to their context. What can be encouraged though, is to consider writing blog posts, undertaking some professional reading and looking for opportunities to strengthen and grow one's professional learning network (places like Twitter or professional associations are ideal for this).

Associated with this discussion is the need to maintain our empowerment and status. Joining a collegiate of like-minded colleagues is one of the greatest things that a teacher can do. And there is nothing wrong with finding this support outside of your immediate school context. In fact, this approach can be an advantage in that it provides another perspective and input to support and value the work of teachers.

Considering the nature of teacher representation within the media based on headlines alone would not be an uplifting experience. The times that teachers do stand up and speak out are often limited to 'opinion pieces' and can be hidden behind both a literal and metaphorical paywall. The Australian Professional Teaching Standards are designed to support all aspects of a teacher's work, including engaging with the community and other stakeholders. Whilst one journalist might say that they were trying to draw attention to an educational issue, the teacher might say that they were damaging it. The fact that all people take an interest in education issues due to their own schooling experience is also problematic in educational media discourse. Whilst it might be well intended, such a view undermines the highly complex professional work and learning that happens with and by teachers in classrooms on a daily basis. When the reverse example is given, a patient telling a doctor how to do their job better would be met with great offence, and yet teachers still have their professionalism attacked by individuals, the media, society, government and no one takes issue with this other than the teachers themselves? Imagine what good the media could do if they were to channel their attention into advancing the profession and building up the social capacity of teachers at a societal level.

Drawing on the expertise of experienced mentors and educational leaders when reflecting on issues is of great benefit to the individual teacher. In fact, the intentional training teachers to lead other teachers using the *Australian Professional Teaching Standards* also respects teacher judgement, handing back the position and power to the teacher. This is their voice, and this is their profession. As a teacher leader, the opportunities to guide others and support them in their roles are endless and this has an impact in the classroom and beyond. It is the art of the conversation and guided reflection which comes through in the leader's style which will see the most success and growth produced in the mentee. Whilst the media holds significant power in stripping away teacher autonomy and minimising or silencing teacher voice, the proven way to re-claim this is by intentionally developing positive teacher to teacher relationships which in turn foster positive identity and professionalism.

One way to perhaps also approach this situation moving forward is to be called a Teacher, not a teacher. This English literary technique of apostrophe gives value and importance to the word that is capitalised. Teachers are professionals, in all aspects of their work. Whilst the media might be quick to frame our work in one way, we as autonomous education experts who have the professional standing and experience, who know the value of our work and just how far and wide it is felt. In this same spirit of asking ‘what’s in a name’, even being mindful of the language of our work is important. No, I am not a worker, I am Teacher, argues Gardner-McTaggart (2021).

The unending suite of teaching awards, recognition, scholarships and opportunities available to teachers is another platform in which the Teachers voice finds its home. These merits, often born in the very classroom and institutions of education themselves, seek to give voice and rise to Teachers leading or implementing brilliant and innovative programmes. They will almost always be united with an aim of improving teaching and learning outcomes, sharing best practice, showcasing expertise and making a difference to others. The platform that comes from Teachers investing in each other, being a sort of cheer squad, and also seeking to elevate the work of their peers sends a powerful message to all—the media and wider society, that teachers do know best and the inner trust around teacher judgement is there and powerful. The networks that being a part of these opportunities provide also open up further opportunities for advocacy, discussion and representation for teacher professional judgement. All Teachers should be urged and encouraged to embrace these opportunities as professional learning experiences that allow for genuine reflection. If not awards and accolades, another natural opportunity for sharing ideas comes from holding leadership roles and serving in different capacities within committees, groups or association memberships. Such coordinated and strategic planning sees the teacher judgement as the strongest capital on offer, as it is relevant and relatable to the context at hand.

7 Conclusion: The Voice of Teachers and the Profession

Teacher agency and autonomy are the pillars to a teacher’s work that must be restored. Society relies on functioning individual citizens to turn the wheels of progress, and unless our Teachers, in all school settings and sectors, have a sense of being trusted with the preciousness of their work, we are all in danger. In thinking about the nature of the profession and the necessary next steps, society and teachers must be urged to prioritise professional trust to teachers more readily. Being a tertiary qualified professional is no small feat. What can be hard for some to grasp is that unquantifiable, invisible work that teachers do, when they change and shape a life. For Teachers to really prove their impact, this starts with their own sense of self and identity. The knowledge that they have their own voice, and that alone, is worth not only hearing, but worth listening to. The politics of education are exhausting for educators who want to teach in the twenty-first Century and prepare young people for an uncertain future using their professional, evidence-based expertise. Trust Teachers and promote their work at its best, not in isolation, but through our collected and sustained efforts.

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Welcome to the New Teacher Tribe: Empowering Beginning Teachers by Co-creating Sanctuaries of Learning

Stephanie Salazar

Abstract Within education, there is much discussion about the ineffectiveness of initial teacher education, yet very little discussion focuses on supporting new teachers once they make it into the workforce. Many new teachers report feeling underprepared from their degree and the fluid and complex nature of effective mentoring and induction receives comparatively less attention from researchers and policy-makers. What is available tends to focus upon the actions of leaders and leadership team and how they might lead these processes and practices. Here, Stephanie explores the processes that she set up to support herself and others in becoming a successful and strongly connected member of the teaching profession. The collegial group she developed, the N*ew Teacher Tribe*, evolved over a period of time, and was built upon democratic and inclusive practices. This chapter explores this idea, and how new teachers can develop through a continuum of attendee, organiser and leader and even into coaching and professional learning support. The idea of a *New Teacher Tribe* is outlined in detail, allowing those interested to create their own similar group to support themselves and their peers upon entrance to the profession.

> The question for my colleagues and me is whether we teacher educators should be seeking to prepare teachers for the way schools are or focus on preparing new professionals for the ways school could and should be? (Struthers, 2018)

1 The Way Schools Are: Why Are We Getting This Wrong and What Are the Consequences?

We scratch our heads wondering why so many new teachers prefer to teach casually or part-time as they begin their careers in education. And we question why nearly half of our new teachers are leaving within the first five years of teaching (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), 2016). New South Wales (NSW) has

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recorded the largest decline in pre-service teachers completing their initial teacher education programmes between 2014 until now (AITSL, 2019; Wilson, 2020) and alternative pathways, such as shorter teaching degrees, are currently being offered to encourage people to join the profession. There is clearly something wrong with the recruitment and sustainability of the teaching profession. However, much of this research focuses on initial teacher education and this ignores what happens once teachers join the profession. What might we find if we looked more closely at current practices being implemented to retain teachers (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012), especially those in the first few years of their career (Buchanan et al., 2013)?

Many new teachers feel isolated and too overwhelmed to cope. If you're not in education, think about when you stepped into your first job after you graduated. If you are an educator, think back to when you were a beginning teacher and the times you considered whether teaching was the right choice for you. Perhaps you were assigned a mentor with whom you had no connection or a supervisor who didn't follow through with the support they promised they would provide. Maybe you felt at risk of being seen as incompetent by your colleagues, your students. Or their parents. As a new teacher, I certainly felt nervous about being perceived as too much of an enthusiast by my colleagues and doubted my ability to cope with challenges, which led me to stop wanting to share with others and then consider whether I had any other skills outside of teaching. Perhaps you have felt a lack of trust in doing what you believe is best for your students. New teachers face increasing challenges to meet the same responsibilities as their experienced colleagues, to meet the expectations of stakeholders and many lose the creativity, the joy and perhaps the purpose they joined the profession in the first place (Mockler, 2017).

New teachers are told that they need to 'survive' their first year of teaching. Despite this many new teachers secretly have high hopes and hold high expectations for themselves, expecting to demonstrate professional resilience as they navigate their way through their career. Over the years, as I continue to attempt to amplify the narratives of many new teachers, and after experienced educators and sometimes leaders learn about my work with the *New Teacher Tribe*, I am told things like, 'You seem to care about things that other people don't really care about'. Referring to the beginning teacher's time I'm told, 'New teachers don't need more time off class. They need to be in the classroom with their kids'. Or more commonly, 'We did it tough, so should they'. There is a strange contradiction at work. Most school leaders would acknowledge that they want new teachers to survive their first year of teaching—yet at the same time, those new teachers are strongly encouraged to say yes to opportunities like running extra-curricular groups and keeping up with the ever-increasing administrative tasks that their colleagues begrudgingly accept. As a result, we have highly capable new teachers who feel alone, confused and in many cases, get burnt out.

2 The Challenge

I hope to challenge readers to think about how we currently invite and support the new teachers who nervously join our schools each year. With a relentless focus on improving student outcomes in reading and numeracy and developing student agency, what are we doing to improve teacher outcomes so that they become agents of their own professional learning journeys and enjoy long and fulfilling careers in the classroom? How are we helping to shape their teacher identities? Of course, there are some initiatives in place, such as assigning new teachers mentors or allocating time for supervisors to observe new teachers' practice, but what impact is this actually having in schools? If there is minimal or no impact on teachers and their students' learning, are we taking the time to reflect on what can be done differently and then taking action? Ultimately, how seriously are we thinking—and acting—in the interests of teachers new to the profession?

The purpose of this chapter is to share with you what works in my context, at a public primary school in Sydney, Australia. I am hopeful that it will inspire you to consider new ways of taking action for the beginning teachers with whom you work. I am no way an expert in this area, but I do think that my strengths include listening to and amplifying the voice of teachers, allowing others to develop an understanding and provoking praxis. It makes sense to me to take care of the people who take care of our students every day in our classrooms. In the following section, I share the development of my thinking about the importance of providing support to new teachers and creating a feeling of belonging via some seminal movements in my own education and career as a teacher.

3 The New Teacher Tribe: A Possible Framework to Increase Teacher Belonging and Empowerment

3.1 What is It?

The *New Teacher Tribe* is a fluid network of individuals who are passionate about supporting pre-service and beginning teachers to be the best they can be for themselves and for their students. Individuals who join the network include pre-service teachers, beginning teachers in the first four years of their career and anyone who would like to support them, including teachers, school leaders and university researchers. Anyone is able to contribute to the New Teacher Tribe events as long as their intention is to achieve better outcomes for new teachers and their students.

The New Teacher Tribe is a community of activist professionals (Sachs, 2000) built on trust, collaboration and open, democratic dialogue. Expertise within the group is utilised to build on new teachers' knowledge and problem-solving capacities. For example, we have used one of our teachers, who is also a university researcher, to role-play challenging scenarios we face with parents, students and other staff members. These workshops allowed new teachers to understand how to apply research-based strategies for managing stress and building resilience, including ‘cognitive reappraisal’ which is a problem-focused coping strategy.

At my school, the *New Teacher Tribe* has become a sanctuary that was co-created with new teachers and school leaders, where we de-compartmentalise the professional and the personal, helping new teachers to navigate, prioritise and manage their professional responsibilities and building their resilience and adaptability. For example, at a *New Teacher Tribe* event during COVID-19, when all professional learning had to occur online, the executive team shared their biggest obstacles as beginning teachers and how they overcame them. New teachers reported how valuable the session was as it normalised a lot of their experiences and made them realise how the leadership team were regular humans too. When new teachers arrive at the school, they are often buddied up with other new staff that take them on a school tour, sharing their stories and experiences. The *New Teacher Tribe* thus creates a bridge of understanding and empathy between new teachers, more experienced teachers and leadership.

We listen actively to new teachers’ ideas and collect feedback, providing opportunities for them to lead *New Teacher Tribe* events. For example, we facilitate forums and interactive workshops where we can share tips for success as they begin the year, programming, assessment, EAL/D strategies as well as hold social events like marking parties and end-of-term breakfasts. All of these opportunities provide a space for new teachers to be honest about their experiences in the classroom and in the staffroom and recognise the expertise of all involved. They enable new teachers to act with passion and experience the fun of teaching! As an additional support, new teachers are supported in owning their professional learning and development through the Instructional Coaching programme, which is discussed later in this chapter.

3.2 What is Its Purpose and Goal?

The explicit goal for the *New Teacher Tribe* is that all new teachers feel supported, encouraged and empowered. This means that new teachers report feeling a sense of belonging because they are equipped with ideas, skills, strategies and a network of individuals who remind them that they are not alone on their teaching journey; one that is full of complexities and obstacles. Ultimately, we want new teachers involved to experience success within themselves, so that they are able to facilitate greater success with their students. The *New Teacher Tribe* aims to empower by building teachers’ wellbeing, self-efficacy and resilience.

3.3 What is Its Structure and How Many Teachers Have Been Part of It?

The *New Teacher Tribe* was established in 2017, as an extension of my work with pre-service teachers through initiatives like #PSTchat (pre-service teacher chat) on Twitter. I will share more about this particular chat later in the chapter.

There is no set structure to the *New Teacher Tribe*; however, I have been facilitating events with a range of educators throughout the past four years. Around 900 teachers across Australia have been involved with the *New Teacher Tribe*. This includes face-to-face and online events. Since its inception we have held twenty-eight events and counting.

The *New Teacher Tribe* is a cost-effective, social support network where expertise is shared and the nature of the network is continually evolving. It takes on an alternative narrative, rather than focusing on a deficit approach, it focuses on meeting new teachers and empowering them where they are, by building on their strengths. I would like to emphasise that what the *New Teacher Tribe* looks like is different every year because it is truly guided by the new teachers, their ideas and their feedback. It is constantly evolving and getting stronger as we respond to their needs. The *New Teacher Tribe* is made sustainable by teachers of all ages and experiences, who are passionate, strategic and responsive.

4 What Actions Brought About the Idea of the New Teacher Tribe?

4.1 The Beginning: Macquarie University

When I was a pre-service teacher I was constantly seeking an understanding of what my future teaching career would look like. Realising that many of my peers shared in my curiosity, I founded the Macquarie University Education Society in 2013 with some of my friends. Working in collaboration with the University's School of Education, TeachNSW and fellow pre-service teachers we co-created a space and opportunities for our questions to be answered and for us to be supported academically and socially. Our events explored: applying for teaching positions; a day in the life of a primary teacher; a secondary school teacher; an Assistant Principal; and a principal; how to prepare for casual teaching days; and how to succeed during practicum. We also organised social events: including picnics; staff versus student soccer games; and a 'Big Lunch'; where department staff were available to converse informally with pre-service teachers. We attempted to create experiences and spaces based on what we thought our teaching career would mirror.

4.2 Participating in TeachMeets and Discovering Twitter

Viewing and participating in TeachMeets (Bryceson, 2012; Esterman, 2011, 2015) since I was a pre-service teacher allowed me to listen to the stories of passionate educators. These educators gave me the belief that I was capable of making an impact with the teachers I work with and the payoffs for my students would be insurmountable. I have continued to attend and organise TeachMeets, face-to-face and online (Kolber, 2020), with a range of educators to ensure that new teachers' unique perspectives are heard.

It was at my first TeachMeet at Taronga Zoo in Sydney where I realised that everyone was posting on Twitter. Twitter is an online platform where you are able to connect with others, share resources and your reflections during events. You can create a professional learning network (PLN) (Goodyear et al., 2019) by following educators and allowing them to follow you. As a pre-service teacher I was able to receive feedback from colleagues about lesson ideas and connect with educators who have become lifelong mentors and friends. Documenting my journey as a pre-service teacher and a beginning, graduate teacher helped me realise that I was not alone. To effectively initiate a *New Teacher Tribe*, I encourage you to join Twitter to help establish your professional learning network so that you can find other educators who share in your passion of supporting new teachers. You will then have a range of connections to draw inspiration from, discuss challenges and celebrate successes with.

4.3 Moving Online: #PSTchat

In 2014, during my penultimate year of my undergraduate studies, I noticed that there wasn't a forum for Australian pre-service teachers on Twitter. I knew how valuable online chats were but I wanted a space where my specific questions could be answered. Hence, I started #PSTchat, a weekly twitter chat dedicated to supporting pre-service teachers around the world. In the beginning, the chat lacked pre-service teacher engagement but reaching out to educators at universities helped to improve this. Through this PLN (Hollweck, 2020), I was able to connect with hundreds of inspiring educators around the world, receive encouragement and feedback on lesson ideas during my practicum experiences and build long-lasting relationships that continue to serve me to this day. Engaging with Twitter throughout my career enabled me, as a new teacher, to feel supported, valued and empowered.

I'm happy to say that #PSTchat has been well received and still continues to run today with different facilitators and guest hosts who share their expertise and passions with beginning teachers. Hundreds of educators have been brought together and involved in the weekly chat, continually discussing a range of topics that help to improve pre-service teacher confidence and growth. #PSTchat was a springboard into my commitment to supporting new teachers in the first few years of their career.

4.4 *From #PSTchat to the New Teacher Tribe*

In September 2017 the EduChangemakers, who had been following my journey on Twitter since I was a pre-service teacher, noticed my work online and invited me to present at their conference. At this event in Melbourne, I developed friendships with principals, experienced and beginning educators around the world. They believed in my provocation: What if we treated beginning teachers as leaders? By this I meant to flip people's perceptions of new teachers (Netolicky et al., 2018), to help us try to see them as leaders of their own learning journeys, capable of solving problems but still in need of specific support.

I also shared a few ideas about what could happen if we established a *New Teacher Tribe* collective. After my presentation I gained the confidence to speak with educational leaders, principals and educators who were leading huge global movements in education. All of these leaders encouraged me to push forward with the idea of the New Teacher Tribe because losing great teachers early on is a recurring issue. If you have an idea like establishing the New Teacher Tribe at your school, I encourage you to share your journey online if you feel comfortable doing so. Fill your environment with people doing what you want to do, whether that be in person or online. Tell them that you are inspired by their story and ask them how they were able to do what they've done.

Later that month I attended and delivered a workshop at the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) Conference in Sydney. Similarly to the conference in Melbourne, organisers from the association invited me to present as they had been following my journey on Twitter and participated in a few of my pre-service teacher events at Macquarie University. When I attended a workshop on creating communities of practice (COPs) (Dufour, 2007; Hord, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 2002; Mercieca & McDonald, 2021; Myers, 1996).I was inspired to write down the following commitment: I am going to ensure that all new teachers feel supported, encouraged and empowered. I am going to help create schools where everyone is dedicated to doing what it takes for all students to succeed.

My work with pre-service teachers since 2013 naturally extended to my work with beginning teachers in 2017. Since then I have facilitated many events at my school, within my school community and beyond, including a free Pre-Service and Beginning Teacher Conference at Macquarie University with around 80 attendees. My mission continues to be to support beginning teachers in a range of ways and to find other people who are truly passionate about doing the same in their contexts.

5 Why Do I Have Such a Positive Outlook?

My first year of teaching was challenging as I struggled to maintain a balance between work and my personal life. I tried hard to prove to others that I deserved the teaching position because in my head I thought I wasn't worthy. This led to having unrealistic expectations of myself and forgetting the importance of my wellbeing. Although I faced internal challenges, I would always be switched on for my students. I think that although my first year of teaching was difficult it was my favourite year because I felt free to be creative in doing whatever it took to help my students learn and grow.

As a beginning teacher I naturally gravitated towards pre-service and casual teachers at my school, always happy to brainstorm lesson ideas and discuss different ways to hook students into learning. My new principal joined the school halfway through the year and I took the initiative to share with her my love of Professional Learning and teaching Science. Towards the end of the year I was given opportunities to lead professional learning for the whole staff such as sharing ways I integrated technology within all Key Learning Areas and co-leading a staff development day on Science pedagogy. After a few years of continuing to develop strong connections with staff, my principal offered me the school's first Instructional Coach position where I would primarily be working in partnership with new teachers.

I have adopted a positive outlook because optimism tempered with a pragmatic approach feels right to me. Optimism that is solution-focused and centred on achieving goals is a quality I find in the biographies of many leaders I aspire to be like. I am attracted to these qualities in other leaders and so it is what I hope to always embody.

6 The Importance of Democratic Leadership

One key thing I have learnt is that without democratic leadership (Harris & Chapman, 2004; Wood, 2004) the opportunity to do the things we do would not exist**.** If you are interested in establishing a New Teacher Tribe community then I encourage you to seek supportive, democratic leaders. Democratic leadership is where people in leadership are involved and participating in the learning, decision-making is shared, with trust modelled by the leader and emanating through to an empowered team. This leads to the culmination and commitment to the achievement of a common goal. Democratic leadership allows for ideas like the *New Teacher Tribe* to be nurtured and flourish. My principal continues to model democratic leadership every day. She supports me and many others in leading projects like the *New Teacher Tribe* initiative. I believe that true democratic leadership is enacted when leaders see the strengths within their team and so they create a space where collaboration, challenge and inquiry into new and creative ideas become the norm. Democratic leadership is imperative for the development and sustainability of initiatives involving younger teachers who seek to feel valued and be engaged, like the New Teacher Tribe.

7 Concerns/Adaptations

Planning events for your *New Teacher Tribe* should be based on what is needed for your new teachers, not necessarily what is on the school's strategic plan. Planning events for the term can be useful but being flexible so that new teachers feel equipped to manage challenging behaviours and understand how to use school wide administration systems may be needed prior to launching into catching up on years of professional learning they may have missed. Think about their schedules and not overcrowding their timetables with events, especially during parent interviews and report writing periods. Speak to your principal to discuss a suitable timetable. We need to be mindful of when events are held, not expecting them to use their release from face-to-face time, as this is precious time for new teachers to complete important work.

Not all new teachers will be interested in joining the *New Teacher Tribe* and attending events, which is fine. We should not force nor judge them for choosing to do something else that is perhaps more of a priority at the time.

Think about your experience when you first joined your school or organisation. What would you have liked as part of your induction programme? Perhaps you wanted less paper and more explicit behaviour management strategies. Use these ideas to form a proposal that you can discuss with your colleagues and Principal.

8 Instructional Coaching Programme

To support the success of our *New Teacher Tribe*, teachers at my school have the choice to opt into our Instructional Coaching programme. My training to become an Instructional Coach began with reading Jim Knight's books (Knight, 2007, 2008) and engaging my principal in impact cycles. We would take turns coaching each other and provide each other with feedback. I also attended a 5-Day Intensive 'Instructional Coaching Group Institute' with Jim Knight and then completed my accreditation over three years with the Instructional Coaching Group. This involved uploading evidence of impact cycles, reflections on my practice and a letter of support from my Principal. As part of my accreditation, I invited an experienced coach to my school to observe a day of Instructional Coaching. He provided me with valuable feedback that I implemented in each subsequent coaching conversation.

When implementing a coaching model it is essential that the Instructional Coaching programme remains opt-in in nature as it gives greater ownership to the teacher and makes the work more meaningful for both parties. Both sides are then so much more heavily invested and open to discussing challenges and potential strategies, rather than it feeling like a forced mentor–mentee relationship.

Through this programme new teachers are able to work in true partnership with a trained Instructional Coach to unpack the reality of what is going on in their classrooms. As Instructional Coaches, we model and truly believe in an equal partnership approach whereby we actively seek and take on feedback from each other to be better educators (Knight, 2007). We are able to really explore and become aware of our own biases towards other teachers, parents, students and their cultures. Collectively we build an understanding and negotiate teaching strategy options that we aim to understand through experimentation and by making checklists of success. With the understanding we gain about our teaching, we reflect and then decide and commit to our next actions together. We work together to ensure that we are always focusing on our students first.

The Instructional Coaching programme positions new teachers where they are able to become self-aware, understand the complexity of the teacher's work, view themselves as learners and engage in deep reflection about their practices. These are all conditions that help to build their teacher identities (Johnson et al., 2010). It provides opportunities for the collaborative planning of teaching and learning, empowering teachers to sustain high-impact strategies (Knight, 2012, 2014) that will benefit all students throughout their career. In my context, I have seen how Instructional Coaching leads to the empowerment of new teachers to make positive change in each other's and our students' lives. Implementing an Instructional Coaching programme may work really well for schools that have many new teachers joining each year.

Throughout my career, I have discovered that when someone believed in me, took the time to support and understand me without judgement and made me feel valued, I found my vision and purpose as an educator. My mission now is to work with educators, through coaching and the *New Teacher Tribe* initiative, so that they see more in themselves and their students. Rather than give advice and share my stories, my philosophy is to learn from others' stories so that I might live and lead a mindful life; one that is full of love and understanding. For example, when beginning a coaching partnership I try to listen actively to a new teacher who shares with me their values, things they don't tolerate in others and what teaching means to them. Listening to their stories helps me understand who they are as an educator and aspiring leader. I understand things they are looking for in our partnership, their expectations of our work together and their expectations of themselves. Moreover, I also understand how to best interact with them, which opens our coaching relationship to many possibilities.

A lot of time is spent in schools supporting new teachers to improve their practice so as to improve student achievement; however, I believe that making time to support new teachers in doing inner work is pertinent. By inner work I'm referring to reflective practices where teachers are guided to take the time to look at their values and expectations and then set personal goals and actionable steps to achieve them. It can enable them to find within themselves what motivates them as educators, help to develop their professional identities and the resilience to overcome obstacles they face throughout their careers. By creating a sanctuary from within they will be more open and able to co-create sanctuaries of learning within their classrooms.

9 The New Teacher Tribe Starter Pack

These are some of the key principles informing the *New Teacher Tribe* and Instructional Coaching Programme:

- New teachers are capable of success
- New teachers thrive on targeted support
- Collaboration empowers new teachers more than competition does

In short, I think that a successful programme like this requires:

- New teachers who are open to continuous learning
- A leader/principal who models democratic leadership and is able to select an appropriate facilitator or champion of new teachers
- A range of teachers who are willing to share their experience
- Time to connect with other educators online to plan events
- Venues for face-to-face events (there are many venues who are willing to donate their space for free in exchange of purchasing a few of their snacks or allowing someone from their team to do a short presentation)

How you might begin as a facilitator of a *New Teacher Tribe* at your school:

- Think about the number of new teachers who join your school each year. Does it make sense to establish a *New Teacher Tribe*?
- Take time to carefully craft your vision and mission for the *New Teacher Tribe* at your school perhaps with a mentor or coach
- Think about people at your school who can help you to coordinate events. What expertise is available? Consider even the new teachers who may be able to share their journeys thus far.
- Create a proposal to enhance your current induction programme, perhaps in consultation with new teachers at your school to ensure that it is tailored to their needs.
- Share this proposal with your principal/school leader and listen to their feedback.
- Begin facilitating events and capture feedback to ensure that events continue to be impactful for new teachers and their students.

Would you like to know more? If you are interested in starting a *New Teacher Tribe* at your school or discussing possibilities about ensuring all new teachers feel supported, encouraged and empowered, please get in touch with me on Twitter via @stephygsalazar.

10 Conclusion: What if?

I feel that there is so much more to achieve for new teachers in Australia but I am restricted in what I can achieve alone. Here are a few possibilities for those of you who believe that all students deserve quality educators, no matter what stage of their career they are in. What if we saw teachers as leaders of their own professional learning journeys? What if we empowered them to see more in themselves, building on their strengths as opposed to fixing their weaknesses? What if we created spaces in our schools for new teachers to not only survive, but thrive? Places where they can share personal puzzles with their colleagues free from judgement, develop their teacher identities and re-establish their commitment to education. Co-creating sanctuaries filled with respect for the worth and dignity of each other. Just imagine the impact our new teachers would have in our students' lives, even beyond the classroom walls.

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I am where I am and felt empowered to facilitate the New Teacher Tribe initiative because people created space for me to be innovative and risk sharing my ideas. I know that is the difference I am meant to make in education; the difference I want to make in the world. Co-creating sanctuaries of learning is what I hope to do with all teachers and students I have the honour of working with.

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Empowering Teachers to Know Their Strengths: Not a Silver Bullet but a Golden Goose

Lisa Starmer and Ruth Smith

Abstract School leaders value the identity, capability and efficacy of their teachers and seek ways to empower teachers in their employment of this expertise for the benefit of student outcomes. Correspondingly, Heads of Department understand the unrelenting nature of teachers' work, the joys of achievement and the challenges of working with an ever-changing cohort of students. School leaders also recognise the diverse, and often competing, expectations that communities and education systems have of their schools. Both school leaders and Heads of Department value effective and efficient professional learning that nourishes teachers, provides the long term, sustainable improvements in classroom practice and facilitates opportunities to achieve the potential of each of the diverse learners in every classroom. Facilitating efficient and effective professional learning that creates sustainable change at the local level whilst addressing broad educational system requirements is the professional challenge facing leaders in schools. Mastering that challenge is key to creating a culture of confluence rather than collision for the community and most particularly for the teachers. It is possible that the collaboration of school leaders and heads of department as instructional leaders sharing strategic and operational perspectives may address this problem of practice. The challenge is amplified by the absence of the literature that addresses the tensions and challenges faced at the school level as they contend with an abundance of research articulating the futility of 'industrial' professional learning and its ruse of efficiency. A significant proportion of the literature explores professional learning from the perspective of teachers, of tertiary institutions or through frameworks such as that of AITSL. Paradoxically there is a dearth of the literature evidencing a democratic model which is deemed effective but challenging not only in its resourcing but also in how it responds to educational system requirements; these are the choices faced by school leadership. This paper will explore the current landscape; what is valued; professional learning and identity; changing to democracy; teacher perspectives and what's next.

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1 Current Landscape of Professional Development and Learning in Australia: School Perspectives

One of the challenges facing school teams is the prioritisation of time and resources within the school day for professional learning, and the competing agendas for its use. Teachers are busier than ever with increasing expectations of them and constantly reducing time available to plan and prepare for greater workloads (OECD, 2005). In the Queensland public education context, compulsory professional learning is restricted through industrial negotiation to fifteen hours on three designated days at the beginning of the school year prior to student attendance, and fifteen additional hours to be negotiated around school hours throughout the year. Conferences and workshops offered during school hours further impact teachers' workloads as missed classes equates to intensification of workload for teachers with reduced timeframes, particularly for those with senior classes where the systemic pressure is greatest (Netolicky, 2020). This creates tension between competing priorities—do teachers choose to undertake professional learning or do they choose to teach their classes, where each moment counts? They know their classes learn best when they are in the classroom, not on professional learning. Unless we acknowledge these tensions and teachers' capacity to manage and balance these within their lives, there is little point asking about their professional learning (Day et al., 2007, p. 76). School leaders also face dilemmas—by what criteria will it be decided what professional learning to devote time and financial resources towards? Professional learning represents a significant investment from all parties, and unless it is employed strategically for clear, identified purposes, and deployed where it will be of most benefit, it will achieve little.

Professional learning is a vital tool for the empowerment of teachers, but the competing discourses of what it means to be professional and the values on which this is based contribute to the tensions experienced by teachers and school leaders. Values such collaboration, collegiality, discretion and trust are, in Evetts' definition of 'new professionalism, usurped by managerialism, bureaucracy, standardization, assessment and performance review' (2011, in Goodwin, 2021). Lingard describes the results of this usurpation as 'uninformed' professionalism' with teachers having little voice or agency in its enactment (2011, p. 234). Sachs' (2016) competing discourses of managerialist and the democratic professionalism create either an entrepreneurial identity for teachers that is fundamentally economic in nature or a community of practice that pivots on collaboration (Sachs, 2001, in Mockler, 2011). Many discussions of professionalism seem to necessitate representations of dichotomies such as within or without, internal or external, (Durrant, 2020) or individual or institutional (Goodwin, 2021). Whitty argues that the articulation of teacher professionalism through a business lens that references targets, benchmarks and arbitrary, decontextualised data, is not professionalism at all (2006, in Durrant, 2020). Whilst this view of professionalism espouses economic values, such as efficient and effectiveness, the reality is that it fails to utilise a key asset of each school, which is the expertise and collective wisdom of its teachers.

If we aim for a culture where our teachers' internal practice is characterised by criticality, innovation, enterprise, creativity and voice (Whitty, 2006, in Durrant, 2020) then we must return our focus to our professional learning. Durrant (2020) suggests finding a place where both the managerial and the democratic perspectives of teacher professionalism can be achieved. School leaders and leadership teams are critical as moderators of the culture that enables this balance. In schools characterised by this culture, teachers embrace Lofthouse's (2019) badge of professionalism as agents of change. Teachers' capacity to perceive themselves as professionals in a democratic culture can assist in enhancing their efficacy. Professional learning and development have the same potential, but the approach taken by national bodies, such as AITSL, is at odds with this position.

2 Our National Framework for Professional Learning

Professional learning in Australia is ostensibly undertaken within frameworks aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) to ensure these standards are met. The standards were introduced with the intention of having a shared national language and a set of explicit statements about what teacher quality is. According to AITSL, they are intended to provide a common language for discussing teaching, and to ensure that standing of the profession is enhanced in the public eye. This has not been our experience at our school, and although the APSTs provide a basic frame of reference for elements of teaching, they fail to engage teachers in critical reflection and goal setting necessary for sustained pedagogical change. This is due to the generic and linear nature of the APSTs (Netolicky, 2020). If these professional standards are to serve AITSL's stated purpose, then they must be processed and understood in the local context so that they are meaningful for teachers rather than a measurement of teachers. Retaining the APSTs intended purpose as a common language and pairing this with a complementary frame that allows teachers to engage with their own experiences, beliefs and professional identity at a much deeper level provides a more fertile ground for reflection, rather than simply being a linear checklist of professionalism (Goodwin, 2021).

The APSTs, like other education policies and frameworks constructed in a managerial perspective, places emphasis on 'what works', which 'privileges that which is easy to measure over the more complex and untidy dimensions of this very human enterprise' (Mockler, 2011, p. 518). This results in a superficial and limiting construct of teachers and teaching, and a tick-box notion of professionalism (Goepel 2012, in Goodwin, 2021). Although the intention may be to promote a positive 'performance and development' culture (AITSL, 2012b, p. 3) in schools, positioning teachers as deficit can create a feeling of vulnerability and defensiveness (Skinner et al., 2019). There is a real danger that, due to the pervading influence of the APSTs and other standards, professional learning may become a tool of compliance in a culture which values a narrow set of data rather than leading to meaningful, sustained pedagogical change (Netolicky, 2020). Whilst the APSTs may seek to enhance the professional standing of teachers in the public eye, by themselves, they promote a view of professionalism and professional learning which does little to position teachers as learning professionals.

The positioning of professionalism in this manner betrays the intelligence and integrity of our leadership in schools. Some authors, such as Crowther and Boyne, exhibit a lack of faith in educational leadership at the executive level which is disempowering for a group who have their roots in teaching. They see most school leaders as neglecting the agency, efficacy and professional fulfilment of teachers in favour of subscribing to a managerialist view for the purposes of externally imposed standards-driven accountability (Crowther & Boyne, 2016). It is unrealistic to presume that AITSL's positioning of the teaching profession goes unnoticed by school leadership. There are challenges for school leaders in standing alone against a systemic positioning of teachers, having experienced this for most of their careers. It requires both an independent and external view, which is a practice not encouraged or rewarded by the system. School leaders do not wish to squander the intellectual energy of their staff with the latest educational fad that may or may not be beneficial to their teachers. It is therefore incumbent upon school leaders to critically review the literature and make evidence-based and context-based choices in the selection, development and provision of professional learning opportunities to staff. What follows is an investigation into some of the available literature to understand why current professional learning practices do not build teacher efficacy and competence and alienate rather than empower teachers in schools.

According to AITSL,

> Professional learning is the formal or informal learning experiences undertaken by teachers and school leaders that improve their individual professional practice, and a school's collective effectiveness, as measured by improved student learning, engagement with learning and wellbeing. At its most effective, professional learning develops individual and collective capacity across the teaching profession to address current and future challenges. (AITSL, 2012a, 2012b, p. 2)

This positions professional learning as passive where teachers and school leaders are deficit subjects of learning, rather than active and critical participants and contributors. An alternative view is where professional learning is viewed as an ongoing and interactive process where teachers will expand, refine and change their practice (Mockler, 2013). Day speaks of moral purpose, acquisition of skills and practice across the years of teachers' professional lives (1999, in Evans, 2008, p. 30).

Further to this, our system, anchored in the AITSL standards, mandates data measurement as a defining aspect of professional learning. However, measurement of teachers' professional learning is not based on quantitative and qualitative measures that are comparable and reliable but on improved student outcomes. Lying at the heart of this issue is the assumption that by imposing an externally devised and imposed set of standards on the teaching profession from a federal level, compliantly meeting these standards will result in quality teaching and higher academic results for students. It is difficult to find this direct line of causality in the literature, that student performance is the direct measure of teachers' learning. School leaders understand that ultimately a high-quality teaching profession is likely to deliver high-quality student outcomes but also that there are many complicating factors in this equation. Desimone (2009) noted that there has been little empirical investigation into the connections between teacher beliefs, content, practice and student achievement and yet the AITSL definition implies one is the success criteria of the other. This study of the literature shows teacher efficacy is not increased by the standardised, industrial model of professional development measured by student outcomes. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) contend that the relentless focus on teacher quality is ‘like looking for your keys under the streetlight when they have been lost in the shadows’ (Galton & MacBeath, 2008, in Durrant, 2020, p. 42). It is acknowledged that improved student outcomes are the ultimate measure of teachers’ professional learning however the trajectory is not linear and a myopic focus on teacher quality and change confines us to the streetlight ignoring depth of the shadows and the contributions of building teacher efficacy.

Somewhat paradoxically, AITSL recognises that ‘professional learning will be most effective when it is relevant, collaborative and future-focused, and when it supports teachers to reflect on, question and consciously improve their practice’ (AITSL, 2012, p. 4). Whilst there is reference to relevance, reflection and questioning, still the primary focus is one of improvement which elicits notions of measurement and rather than building efficacy. The APST and its attendant tools present teaching as a knowledge-based, technical endeavour and minimises the complexity, ambiguity and creativity of the profession (Netolicky, 2020). Bacci (2009 in Gore, 2021) warns of the need to be mindful of teachers’ conceptions and their impact on the expected outcomes of any system professional development programme. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) call it ‘decisional’ capital and Day (2017 in Durrant, 2020) equates it with agency. Teachers have greater investment than technicians and the prevalence of both measurement and practice within AITSL’s definition of professional learning is at odds with the generation of a positive perception, by teachers, of professional learning. The agency that Durrant (2020) describes and that teachers experience in the nature and method of professional learning is a critical component of teacher identity and self-efficacy. The presence of teacher agency in professional learning defines whether a staff have voluntary engagement or conscripted compliance. The prevalence of the latter contributes to the pejorative perception of professional development described by Durrant (2020).

Teachers’ beliefs and perspectives are crucial to development of professional learning and are often enacted in informal professional learning situations within schools and across spans of time. Two key factors have emerged for school leadership: if professional learning is to be successful, then teachers’ efficacy is crucial and if professional learning is to be valued, teacher agency must be evident.

3 What is Valued as Professional Learning by Teachers?

Within schools, the time available for teachers to engage in professional learning is significantly constrained. School leadership must balance the system imperatives for an ever-increasing number of mandatory trainings and system-wide requirements, against the context-based needs of their teachers for staff meetings, faculty, subject or year level meetings and other necessary school-level processes. To address the systemic pressure for constant improvement, a broad-brush, managerial approach at system or school level is most often utilised to implement system-wide requirements, which is unsurprising. The goal for this style of professional development can only be to 'ensure' compliance or minimum standards, as this generic approach fails to account for the individual context of the school and its teachers (Netolicky, 2020). A constant source of tension for school leaders is trying to balance these externally imposed measures against the context-based professional learning required to achieve the individual improvement goals of the school, the groups within it, and those of individual teachers (Glover & Law in Netolicky, 2020).

There is however another factor from the school leadership perspective. There is a large body of knowledge about what does not work across all aspects of education but notwithstanding the financial and logistical aspects of delivering professional learning in any form, there is frequently a lack of authentic, reliable and independent research based in local contexts that provides not just what is required next but how that next step might be delivered. School leadership is bombarded with expensive programmes to be delivered by external 'experts' to passive consumers. It is assumed that this delivery will directly result in change of teacher practice, and it frequently fails to achieve this. What is lacking in these approaches is consideration of what happens prior to undertaking the professional learning, so that teachers are active, engaged and reflective actors in the process.

Teachers frequently have little choice in the professional learning they undertake. 'In 22 years of teaching, no one has ever asked me what I wanted to learn' is the opening statement of Flint et al. (2011, p. 1163) research paper, and a comment echoed in many staff rooms around the world. These researchers studied a generative professional development model set against a background of imposed, standardised professional development. Their small-scale writing project developed organically in response to the teachers' needs and found that without a predetermined goal or fixed outcome, professional learning led to teachers gaining new understandings and experimenting in the classroom. Projects such as these demonstrate the power of teacher voice and agency in professional learning.

In our experience, professional learning most valued by teachers takes account of their expertise, is context-specific and is immediately applicable to their classroom. Collaborative and teacher-led professional learning, such as Professional Learning Communities, Communities of Practice, mentoring and coaching, when undertaken authentically rather than imposed by a top-down approach, are valued by teachers (Netolicky, 2020). Our teachers have embraced job-embedded professional learning, and in our experience, these types of experiences lead to sustained professional sharing and conversations. 'Watching Others Work' sessions (WOWs) are a frequent professional learning tool for our staff. WOWs value teacher practice, competence and leadership which stimulate teachers' engagement. Teachers frequently arrange this between themselves and learn from both the observation and the subsequent conversations. Our teachers also engage in TeachMeets, where they share a pedagogical approach with their colleagues across Faculties and Year levels. Our TeachMeets operate as concurrent sessions, where teachers choose which sessions they want to attend. Teacher expertise and voice is critical to the success of TeachMeets. Whilst the overarching purpose might be in line with systemic reforms and school improvement goals, both WOWs and TeachMeets empower teachers, positioning them as both learners and experts. This is advocacy for teacher leadership, where 'good' teachers are understood to cultivate their own sense of agency, initiative and self-belief (Galton and MacBeath, 2008 in Durrant, 2020, p. 42).

Considering the subject of professional learning, Louws et al. (2017a, 2017b) identify that when teachers have agency over the subject matter of professional development, there are consistently two problems to which they seek solutions through learning: work-management concerns and student outcomes. These researchers saw such a strong link between these two issues that they referred to them as a 'pair'. Continuing to explore the 'what' of professional learning for teachers, Beck and Kosnik in 2014 and Feiman-Nemser before them in 2001 also noted 'pairs' of goals: teacher-student relationships and discipline and pedagogical knowledges. These mirror Hargreaves and Fullan's 'social capital' and 'human capital' (2012) as key components of teachers' professional capital. Teachers using 'decisional capital' (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) to prioritise these goals change how they perceive themselves, repositioning them as adaptive experts (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

The nature of professional development is the second area that school leadership can impact. Johnson et al. (2017, p. 342) brought to the fore the ineffective nature of traditional professional development that was standardised and delivered over short duration. Instead, they promulgated that professional learning driving lasting change needed to be tailored to teachers' experience, needs and contexts. Central to Johnson, Sondergeld and Walton's research, based on Desimone's (2009) five critical features of effective professional development, are two key factors: coherence and duration. Active learning, inquiry and collaborative models enabled Johnson et al. to identify a relationship between a conceptual framework for professional learning and improved teacher quality and preparedness to deliver curriculum, linking research and practice with professional learning design (2017, p. 347) (Fig. 1).

Professional learning design that includes both duration and coherence, benefits from incorporating the remaining core features of Desimone's framework (2009) including learning in networks, peer coaching and collaborative action research and the like. All of these are preferred means of engaging in professional learning (VanDriel et al., 2001) and de Vries et al. (2013, p. 86) confirm that teachers will have higher participation rates in these collaborative activities than they do in reflective activities. They propose further considering reflection as a means of professional learning, stating,

> Reflection is a major professional activity (Eraut, 1995; Schön, 1983) and vitally important to continuous professional development (Cheetham & Chivers, 2001), because it helps teachers explicate their implicit tacit knowledge and beliefs, granting them more control over their

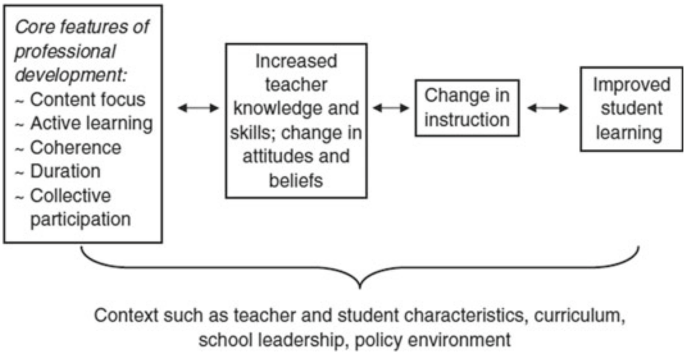
Core features of professional development:
~ Content focus
~ Active learning
~ Coherence
~ Duration
~ Collective participation
Increased teacher knowledge and skills; change in attitudes and beliefs
Change in instruction
Improved student learning
Context such as teacher and student characteristics, curriculum, school leadership, policy environment

Fig. 1 Proposed core conceptual framework for studying the effects of professional development on teachers and students

> routine actions in the classroom and, if necessary, the ability to make changes. (Schön, 1983 in de Vries et al., 2013, p. 86)

De Vries, van de Grift and Jansen's (2013) work demonstrated a link between teachers' beliefs about learning and their engagement in continuous professional development. Teachers were presented as having a complex role incorporating both the knowledge expert and deliverer and the facilitator and activator of student learning (2013, p. 334). The study noted teachers' lack of time spent in reflective activities and yet research such as that completed by Vanblaere and Devos found that 'reflective dialogue was significantly related to perceived changes in practices' (2016, p. 220). Reflection is not a skill set that is encouraged by our system, with time allocated and teachers' responses valued and yet it seems that it might be a significant contributor to teacher self-efficacy and hence agency. If professional learning can be structured to develop teachers' reflection skills and they experience a level of agency and trust within the school, then the literature indicates that they may engage in the higher level of professional learning that might be expected from the profession. (Louws et al., 2017a, 2017b, p. 783).

Teachers in schools state openly, with regret, that they haven't got time for reflection. They are harried and stressed and yet de Vries et al. (2013, p. 341) speak of the supportive and therapeutic benefits of collaborative learning and the impact of reflection. Korthagen (2017) also prioritises teachers' capacity to engage in purposeful, professional reflection, particularly reflection-on-practice after the fact. His *Professional Development 3.0* demands that teachers value their own work through reflection. To do so will require a level of adaptability in our profession's professional learning requirements. This is another challenge for school leaders that speaks to the constraints of the structure of the system: how teacher time is allocated to privilege reflection, staffing models, face to face teaching minutes and the overall burden of increased workload and seemingly reduced time available.

The third consideration brings the discussion full circle to the concept of professionalism, what it means in terms of identity, how teachers are positioned by the nature of their learning and how it is valued or measured by the system. Dutch researchers Zwart et al. (2015) reported on the 'Quality from Within' (QfW) approach to professional learning. QfW is a response to the lack of success for traditional professional development in delivering meaningful and sustainable professional growth (Zwart et al. (2015). The intent of the programme was to create working environments in which teachers might thrive and flourish. Worth noting is the intention to make a professional change and measure the success of that change through a direct relationship to the teachers, who were experiencing the change. The ongoing learning through the QfW approach, like the research of Johnson et al. (2017) integrates theory and practice. It stands in contrast to the externally developed professional learning with fixed goals and external pressure (Korthagen, 2017) that excludes the teacher as a co-designer (van Driel et al., 2012). QfW ignores the top-down political organisational aspects of schools (Zwart et al., 2015), instead embracing a stance in which teacher strengths can thrive.

Situating professional learning within a frame of individual teacher strengths paired with the APST is a way to bring coherence for the individual teacher, enhance teacher voice and firmly position the teacher as a central actor in the process. A strengths-based approach has the capacity to incorporate all these factors through the self-determination upon which it inherently relies. Teachers, being capable and willing to identify their strengths as the starting point of their learning, will change the nature of professional learning not just from a deficit to strengths focus, but in how teachers are positioned, and position themselves in relation to professional learning. Whether it be a strengths-based approach, an appreciative inquiry, reflective practice, focus on inner strength or acknowledgement of teachers' professional capital, these all demand that the teacher is central, not peripheral, to the development of the learning; its nature, delivery, duration and means of engagement and ultimately how its success is measured. Using two studies as testimonials, one with school leaders and the other following the mentoring of pre-service teachers, there is evidence indicating that the leadership teams of schools might find a way forward within this style of professional learning.

Cooper and Woods (2017) experimented with the provision of strengths-based professional learning (SBL) to Heads of Schools through psychologists using a programme called Realise2. The Heads of School noted the unusual and surprising impact of a positive frame of reference. The group spoke of increased self-awareness of strengths, recognition of learned behaviours, weaknesses and unrealised strengths (Cooper & Woods, 2017, p. 42). Tian and Louw (2020), working with pre-service teachers, use 'appreciative advising', a strengths-based mentorship using reflection and advice instead of a deficit-based appraisal. The purpose of mentoring the trainees was therefore to support trainee's needs, understand their motivations and leverage their strengths (p. 396). The research is embryonic and not sufficiently large scale, reliable and comparable but so far it suggests that improved success of teachers' professional learning might be benefitted by the pursuit of a strengths-based approach. Expanding upon the role of reflection, Korthagen (2017) shares the findings of Zwart et al. (2015) which suggests that 'strengths-based' professional learning creates enthusiasm in teachers who report higher levels of autonomy and self-efficacy, all of which promote further learning.

By reconceptualising professional development in a frame of individual teacher strengths, school leadership can provide the opportunity to personalise teacher learning; just as we are expected to deliver to students. Short and Rinehart identified in 1992, six dimensions of teacher empowerment: decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact (Bogler & Somech, 2004, p. 278). Empowering teachers means building their sense of efficacy, which is integral to their identity, both collectively and individually and professionally and personally. As Sachs established, professional identity 'is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience' (2005, in Oruç, 2013, p. 208). If this is correct, then the layering of personal and professional teacher identity may provide a resilient, long lasting and sustainable change to teachers, teaching and professionalism.

4 Professional Learning and Professional Identity

The role of teacher identity is critical in the process of enacting sustained change in practice through professional learning. As a school, we value the development of autonomy through voice, choice and agency not only for our students, but also for our teachers, a stance more aligned with the democratic approach (Bogler & Somech, 2004, p. 278). Positioning professional learning in a school culture anchored in these values has challenged us to go beyond the APST, and 'understand the process by which teachers grow professionally and the conditions that support and promote that growth' (Evans, 2019, p. 3). This calls for a deeper understanding of how professional learning, connected to teacher identity, can lead to sustained pedagogical change.

Developing teachers' understanding of their strengths entails understanding the process of construction and mediation of teacher identity, and how it is linked to pedagogical change. Elsewhere, with the sustained focus on teacher quality, standards-based notions of professionalism and accountability, the beliefs and values of teachers, and the way they are enacted through their day-to-day practice has been disregarded (Gibbs, 2018). We contend that a teacher's pedagogy is a direct result of their beliefs and values, and if meaningful, sustained change to pedagogy is to occur, then explicit engagement with teacher identity through identification of strengths through reflection is critical. Mockler states that 'professional learning lies at the intersection of professional context and personal experience, requiring both professional and personal relevance to be effective in improving or changing practice' (2011, p. 521). Day et al. (2007) view "identity as a key factor influencing teachers' sense of purpose, self-efficacy, motivation and commitment. They contend that whilst notions of self and personal identity are used in educational theory, critical engagement with teachers' cognitive and emotional selves is rare, yet necessary to raise and sustain standards of teaching and contribute to teachers' effectiveness" (Durrant, 2020, p. 52). Developing teachers' understanding of their strengths and identity is a complex, reflective process and requires a shift in the conceptualisation of the teacher and their role in professional learning in schools and systems if it is to result in sustained change in pedagogy.

5 Changing to a Democratic Lens—A Vignette of Possibility

Three years ago, we sought to change our approach to professional learning, having noted that many teachers engaged with this process in a superficial manner. Through an approach which seeks to balance the managerial and democratic stances, we have sought to empower our teachers to 'renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives' (Day, 1999, in Evans, 2008, p. 30). We hypothesise that this will result in greater effectiveness of professional learning, and therefore increased positive influence on learning, engagement and well-being for all members of our school community (Bogler & Somech, 2004).

Currently, the Department of Education and Training (DET) in Queensland requires all teachers and school leaders to address their professional learning needs through the *Annual Performance Development Plan* (APDP). This process is firmly anchored in the APSTs. The APDP requires teachers and school leaders to utilise AITSL's self-reflection tools to identify strengths and areas for development in the first section of the document. The remainder of the document deals with addressing teacher-identified areas of development, including what professional learning they may undertake to address these. A section for evidence of achievement of goals is also included.

Part of the problem lies in the way in which the APST is enacted through the APDP process. The process focuses almost exclusively on areas of development for teachers, with little consideration given to strengths. It is within this context teachers are expected to identify professional learning to improve their areas of development. Arguably, this positions teachers as inherently deficit, and as most of the ongoing discussion throughout the year between the teacher and their 'supervisor' centres on the teacher's areas for improvement, this reinforces that perception. The process also presents the APST as the sole arbiter of what is considered 'best practice' without the necessary pairing with a contextualising frame. Our review of the literature and our experience shows that without this pairing, it fails to engage teachers in deep reflection on their practice and therefore identification of the most appropriate professional learning needs.

6 Empowered Teachers Approach to Meeting Standards

We noted that our high performing teachers possessed strengths, including qualities, skills and knowledge which couldn't be neatly categorised into one of the APST standards statements, but which was at the core of their teaching practice. We needed an approach which followed the words of Richard Elmore, where he noted "the importance of teachers striking an external (standards)—internal (personal) balance in their professional lives" (in Crowther & Boyne, 2016, xvii). Here, the personal dimension refers to the 'vital force, the intrinsic efficacy, the idiosyncratic spirit of the individual teacher' that drives and informs teachers in their enactment of their profession (Crowther & Boyne, 2016, xvii). The balance that we sought was between the internal, personal domain of teacher identity, encompassing teacher strengths and identity and the external standards of the APST. Therefore, an articulation of their unique strength, using language to complement and enhance the generic statements of the APST was required.

To address these issues, we sought a way to incorporate and acknowledge individual teacher strengths into the APDP process. Our starting point was Crowther and Boyne's work around developing statements of pedagogical gifts (Crowther & Boyne, 2016). Their recognition that 'one side of the coin—the Professional Standards side—has been comprehensively developed over the past decade, whilst the other side—the unique gifts of each individual teacher—has been largely ignored' (Crowther & Boyne, 2016, p. xxii), and the process that they designed to address this gave us our starting point.

Our first step was to help staff to understand and articulate their pedagogical gift, using Crowther and Boyne's (2016) work as the guide. Over the course of about 6 months, teachers worked through Crowther and Boyne's process to reflect on their strengths and develop a statement of their pedagogical gift. Initially, these statements were superficial and situated within the boundaries of the APST. Gradually, with further reflection and trust in the process, teachers were able to refine these and step outside the professional standards and see themselves as possessing a unique pedagogical gift that was at the core of their practice.

One of our challenges was with the APDP document itself, which is used by teachers to record their professional learning goals and progress towards it. As an agreed process between DET and the Queensland Teachers' Union, no changes were to be made to document template. Our solution has been a compromise. Although we could not change the template of the document, we could alter the lens through which we viewed specific section of it. Teachers included the statement of their pedagogical gift in a section where a teacher statement was required prior to discussion with their supervisor. This provided the basis for conversations with their supervisor, usually a Head of Department, around their self-identified gift and professional learning needs.

In addition to a change to the approach to the APDP process, we also broadened the opportunities for teachers to engage with each other in informal professional learning. Teachers' statements of their pedagogical gifts showed that much of the expertise sought through external professional learning lay within our College, in their colleagues. Part of our approach has been to connect teachers with complementary gifts and identified professional learning areas so they can learn from one another. This, paired with diversifying our approaches to professional learning, have been very positively received by our teachers, as has the Pedagogical Gifts process.

7 Teacher Perspectives

We sought to understand the impact that this process has through interviews with volunteer teachers within our school. These teachers were diverse in culture, experience and longevity at the school and across disciplines. The initial shift in self-perception took time and was difficult. All teachers agreed that the initial shift in thinking about themselves as a teacher was particularly challenging. Whether teachers were beginning teachers, highly experienced teachers or early career middle leaders, all found it difficult to see themselves through a lens of strengths, and objectively identify what their pedagogical gift might be. Most expressed that it was far easier to identify and focus on deficits.

> Thinking about gifts and strengths was harder – naturally you want to criticize yourself.

> At first it was difficult. I just never thought about it before. I never thought I had a pedagogical gift.

One aspect of incorporating a statement of pedagogical gift into the APDP process was that for some teachers, it uncovered feelings associated with imposter syndrome, a result of being positioned as deficit by the APST.

> ... you never want to say things out loud for fear they will come for you as the charlatan that you are. So for me, it was actually articulating it out loud, and saying actually I am good at this and I am proud of this.

> I've always felt really confident and capable but when I had to identify a gift there was a bit of imposter's syndrome. I found it difficult to claim an area of specialty, especially as a new teacher I felt almost like I didn't have the right yet to claim an area that I am good at and share it with others.

Articulating their pedagogical gift resulted in greater focus and confidence in professional learning for a few teachers. For one, it provided the clarity of focus so they could see what their next step in their career was, and had the confidence in their abilities to undertake it.

> It has definitely given me a lot of confidence. Once I realised what my gift was, I was able to target the kinds of resources I was looking at, the kinds of pedagogical strategies, the kinds of resources I'm using, is it going to enable the way I naturally teach.

> Standards are there – I can read through them but it doesn't mean I can relate to them as easily as the pedagogical gift. It [pedagogical gift] really narrows down to what I'm good at and what I need to work on.

Using the pedagogical gifts process with the AITSL standards has moved teachers away from a ‘tick-box’ mentality of professional development to one which is more authentic. One teacher referred to the pedagogical gift as her ‘lens’ through which she viewed the APST. Another found it a process which helped to really know herself as a teacher.

> With the AITSL standards, I was always been looking to identify in my practice how I’ve met this particular standard, whereas with the [pedagogical] gift I felt like I really had to tune into who I am as a teacher, not just I need to tick this box and tick this box, but what’s the area I feel like I glow in, or area of passion or interest. I found it more difficult even though it should have been easier to know.
>
> (At Uni) we always did a lot of reflection, but it was reflection on how have I met these standards that are expected of me. When asking the question, who am I as a teacher, it’s always within these axes, like am I a behaviorist, or [an] authoritarian. Do I need to fit a scaffold in a way or can I walk into a room and really acknowledge and embrace who I am and what I bring to that classroom?

8 What Next?

Through our interrogation of both the AITSL professional standards framework and the literature that provides commentary on this and other similar structures that seek to define and deliver professional learning, we seem to have travelled close to the end of what is known. Perhaps this is a bold statement or perhaps it is indicative of the sense of efficacy that still accompanies leadership in schools. Our reading and our lived experience have exposed key tensions and constraints and the effects these have on school leaders and decision-making as it impacts teachers. School leaders understand that their most potent and valuable resource within the system are the teachers. We acknowledge professional learning as a vital tool in the meaningful, sustained development of pedagogy for the betterment of our students’ learning, engagement and well-being. We also understand that teachers do not feel valued by a system that demands outcomes without appreciation of teachers’ beliefs or acknowledgement of their competence and their strengths. If teacher agency builds efficacy, which is a determinant of teacher retention, then school leaders know that they have challenging times ahead if they are to deliver the outcomes demanded by the system and the wider community.

Our chapter is the beginning of our teachers’ next generation of professional learning. Starting with professional reflection, acknowledging teachers’ competence and recognising their strengths, our next steps will encourage our teachers to chart their own learning in a way that is most responsive to their needs. Challenges abound in terms of the logistics required but so too do resources abound with so many teachers demonstrating diverse competence and commitment to their professional colleagues. Teacher efficacy is central, as we value individuals’ strengths and how these might contribute to the collective practice in our school context. We need research to share this journey and courage to stay the course in the face of continual systemic demands for improved student outcomes. A nourishing environment in which our future generations of students will grow into the leaders of tomorrow is a consequence of striving for this alternative approach to the professional learning of our teachers that fulfils their professional need for efficacy and agency. As a school leader and Head of Department, respectively, this journey has shown us the potential that a strengths-based approach has to empower our teachers and necessitating our acceptance of the corresponding challenges.

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Empowering Teachers: Beyond the Classroom

Looking beyond the classroom is something that allows teachers and practitioners to consider their practices within, to ensure that they have a clear through line between their beliefs and their practices, as teacher. Indeed considering oneself as a citizen, with a role of citizenship can itself be a shift in understanding. While this may seem as another series of expectations to be placed upon teachers, many teachers already exist as activists, politically informed and aware, and willing to comment on a range of social issues. Of course, the separation between these actions, and the actions of professionals, within schools and classrooms are important. We are not advocating for teachers to lead, or guide their students towards particular political views, but rather to let their views inform the way they approach their teaching, and their practices as professionals.

As outlined in Part Four, we see many avenues for teacher empowerment beyond the classroom within the auspices of their guidance and leadership. There are also many spaces within the leadership of schools, including middle and upper leadership roles to leverage new and emerging understandings of education, including democratic practices. While a close focus upon teachers, classrooms and schools has been explored within the preceding sections of this volume, this is not explored with an occlusion of spaces beyond the classroom, and indeed the school level.

Beyond the classroom, there are constant concerns for teachers new to the profession. With persistent media coverage and political commentary that teaching needs to attract the ‘best and brightest’, has being mentioned alongside the ineffectiveness of Initial Teacher Education.

Just as teachers and schools are viewed with concern for their radical ideas, University lecturers, partly as a result of their persistent insistence on challenging the status quo, are similarly viewed with concern.

For teachers, some would suggest that the very manner of mass delivery of education within the University sector does not empower teachers to be, nor provide them with the modeling of best practice that they may replicate in schools. The well-established disconnect between teachers and education lecturers is partly to blame here, as apart from placements within schools, most teachers-to-be do not engage regularly with actual, practising teachers.

Sandy Niccol shows ways that Initial Teacher Education can be revitalised in cost-effective ways, including leveraging simple tools like listening, alongside uses of social media to empower this group. She suggests that accountability has increased apace without allowing freedom for either the teacher-educator or the would-be-teachers who they are leading.

Naomi Barnes and Jennifer English show that schooling itself has always contained cultural attachments that have persisted throughout history. They explore the ways that these cultural beliefs and expectations of what schooling is shape the difficulties and mistreatment that emerge within schools themselves, including especially those traditionally excluded from mainstream schooling practices.

Marc Pruyn, Elham Foomani, Urmee Chakma and Lisa Cary provide a call to action, for teachers, students and learners to consider their place within citizenship, as actors and educators. Noting that social justice is a process and a cause that warrants closer examination within the realms of education, seeking a transformative citizenship conception aimed at liberation and system improvement.

Empowering Pre-service Teachers: Perhaps Being an Influencer Is a Good Thing?

Sandy Nicoll

Abstract In this chapter, I argue that when we empower pre-service teachers through engaging teaching within teacher preparation courses and fostering opportunities for coursework to align with the work in schools we assist them to become 'profession ready' rather than 'researcher ready' which is a more valuable outcome for pre-service teachers. I argue that it is time to break the assumed rule that essays are the most effective way to assess students. Whilst writing matters, the kind of writing encouraged in some teacher education courses has little value beyond the university. To analyse how this came to be a dominant approach, despite doubts about its efficacy, I examine the Australian Institute of Teacher and School Leadership (AITSL), Learning Intentions (Hattie & Timperley in The power of feedback. Review of educational research, 77(1):81–112, 2007); the value of being an 'influencer' through social media for social justice and democracy; and the importance of Inquiry and the 4Cs framework. As a solutions-driven type of person and an optimist, I propose a new way forward for initial teacher education.

> Learn the rules like a professional so you can change them like an artist—Pablo Picasso

1 Learning the Rules

As a former sessional academic at two different universities for 15 years, and a primary teacher since 1993 who still teaches in schools, I know the 'rules' in education well, and especially so in New South Wales, Australia. These rules are often presented via policy and workplace culture. They are also present in our teaching practice. At this stage of my career, I disagree with so many of the rules, and in this chapter, I am seeking to outline my thoughts about why they are wrong, and how they might be improved. This chapter is different from many other academic chapters that

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I've written: it is an unashamedly personal reflection of someone who feels strongly about education, having worked in many different facets of the industry for many years. In doing so, I am also putting forward a vision of the future: I wish to be part of a global movement where we come together as teachers, to change the rules for the benefit of our pre-service teachers Changing the rules will fight against teacher burnout especially amongst early career teachers: four out of the ten pre-service teachers will leave the profession within the first five years of their career (AITSL, 2016, p. 4). Instead of leaving the profession, as so many of my teaching colleagues have done, I want to advocate for pre-service teachers to have a voice. I wish to empower them so that they might improve the standing of the profession, and thus improve education.

2 A Career Teacher

I came to teaching after a career in nursing. I knew I liked teaching, kids and fun, so I chose to become a primary teacher. Upon completion of my degree, I was a targeted graduate (a pre-service teacher given permanency upon graduation). The year I graduated there was a 10 year wait for a permanent role. My first role was at a school in Mt Druitt in Western Sydney. This school was classified as 'hard-to-staff'. I stayed for more than eight years. I loved this school, for it was where I learnt to teach. The student community had numerous cultures, predominantly from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, and was rife with disengaged students. The teaching staff were mostly early career teachers—like myself. This position saw me become a member of the school executive, teach in class, and become the Release from Face to Face (RFF) teacher and coordinator of subject areas such as Mathematics. I was empowered by my principals to trial new and innovative programmes such as a whole school public speaking programme, team teaching amongst others. Then as my own children came along, the 2 hour each way drive got too much, and I transferred to the Ryde district. Again, I loved it. This school was the exact opposite. It was smaller (156 kids from 850), and the students were at the top of the Basic Skills Tests, (the forerunner to the National Assessment Program—Literacy And Numeracy [NAPLAN]). English was, for most students, their first language. The common threads or themes for me across both schools was my love for the students, the parents, my desire to succeed with the disengaged students and the critically important role that leaders play. Crucially, though, I learned these things 'on the job'—I wasn't prepared well enough in my studies to meet all that was required of an early career teacher. My experience was hardly unusual: this is clearly part of the reason that so many new teachers leave the profession. Something that I have learned from my work as an academic and as a teacher is that initial teacher education (ITE) plays a key role in developing the profession—but based on my experiences, ITE is not meeting the needs of pre-service teachers (PSTs), the profession, or broader society.

3 Why is ITE not Working as It Should?

My reflections upon the failure of ITE are that it encourages PSTs to focus on predominantly quantitative ‘evidenced based’ approaches. This is visible in the rise of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership and their Australian Professional Standards for Teaching (APSTs). Very few would argue with the proposition that Australia wants quality teachers. But how best might one determine what counts as ‘quality’—and how to develop it? More specifically, why are so many people who make these decisions people with limited or no school experience? Another problem lies in the people delivering ITE: for some of them, there seems to be little interest in teaching, either their students or the profession as a whole. In this section, I will discuss the trends influencing ITE, the role of AITSL, and the divide between coursework and professional experience.

4 Global Trends Influencing ITE

Trends like globalisation (Yates & Young, 2010), neoliberal accreditation agendas, and the role of technology are impacting upon the experiences of pre-service teachers. Globalisation can be described as spatial patterning and imaginaries (visions) that change citizens’ expectations of life opportunities (Scholte, 2007; Walsh, 2012). Neoliberalism or economic rationalism is about policy decision-making informed by free-market thinking. This political ideology is common within westernised countries like the USA, the United Kingdom and Australia. It advocates for the rise of a free market, through minimal government intervention, income distribution and aggregate employment determination. These initiatives were designed to foster economic growth, where citizens are believed to have a greater level of choice (Angus, 2015; Munck, 2006; Thorsen & Lie, 2009). Technology certainly fosters the ability for a knowledge worker to be creative and successful in a time of post-modernity in the new educational paradigm (Cope & Kalantzis, 2008; Kalantzis & Cope, 2018). ‘Ubiquitous learning’ is increasingly common across industries globally. These trends are changing approaches to ITE and the knowledge and skills pre-service teachers are expected to have upon graduation to become’profession ready’ (Nicoll, 2019). This has become a hotly debated area. Chatelier (2013), for example, has called for a review of practices within ITE and asks if it is time we returned to a more humanistic approach which aligns with ideas put forward by Plato, Kant, Rousseau and Dewey. He states this should be facilitated during ITE preparation and I agree with Chatelier’s proposals.

One of the main factors for why professional experience I have asked why professional experience is not started earlier in the programme and the response is it costs too much. I find that answer dubious and I do not believe them—after all, there are other ways of saving money and some universities are reporting surpluses (Cahill, 2022). I suggest removing lectures and spending the money on professional experience. I argue that universities have lost their way as they try to be models of evidence-based practice (I prefer the phrase ‘effective practice’) which is a result of a very narrow version of what constitutes educational data, such as that proposed by John Hattie (2008). What about teacher stories? Evidence and theory have no real value if it cannot be utilised by our teachers to influence practice.

5 AITSL as an Unrepresentative Board

Another part of this problem lies in the leadership of the profession. The peak group for educators in Australia is AITSL. Yet when one examines the board, there are some notable absences. The majority of the board is not made up of classroom teachers. Yes, we see principals and school leaders but where are the pre-service and early career teachers? I also ask why there are only quantitative researchers there? Where are the qualitative researchers?

At this level, when determining policy, there is a preponderance towards meta-analyses. Simpson (2018) notes ‘meta-analyses are heavily promoted by policy makers’ (p. 899). Of course, this is because the board is constituted by invitation from the Federal Education Minister—there is no statutory requirement for specific groups to be represented—and that means it will lean in the direction of the government’s prevailing ideology.

6 The Coursework and Professional Experience Divide

According to the APSTs, central to the practice of teaching is a link between the practice of teaching and connecting with students. For example, AITSL Standard 1 reads: ‘Know Students and How they Learn’ (AITSL, 2021), this seems logical and very few would argue with this. Traditionally ITE sees a distinction between coursework and professional experience (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Zeichner, 2010), but in Australia, much of ITE is taken up with coursework—and not professional experience. Professional Experience opportunities often occur only in the second and third years of study. This seems a bit contradictory when we see AITSL Standards 1 through 5 are about practice in the classroom. Surely, ITE should be weighted in this direction? Should much of the time not be spent on professional experience? Certainly, some of the literature (Darling-Hammond, 1997, 2017; Zeichner, 2010) has also called for this.

Perhaps the best-known example of practice-based learning was proposed by John Dewey (1916, 1938). This was a forerunner of what is now described as professional experience programmes. Ball and Cohen (1999) took the ideas put forward by Dewey (1916, 1938) and also identified the importance of grounding professional education in experiences through practice. This practice involves offering a centre for professional study and for ITE this is described as field experience, practicum, or

Professional Experience Programs (PEP). This is when PSTs are offered an opportunity to put formal learning, their coursework, into practice. Olsen and Craig (2012) remind us of the importance of reflection and the connection with social justice.

Voices from within ITE suggest that, for PSTs, expectations during university studies have intensified. Calls to reclaim accountability in Teacher Education (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018) are evident whilst expectations placed upon pre-service teachers continue to increase. This raises questions about the link between intensified workloads and standardisation (benchmarking)—something that in-service teachers are also wrestling with. There is little doubt this process of benchmarking is altering spaces within university preparation both physically and ideologically.

7 Out of Date Approaches in Universities

Are universities keeping up with classroom practice in primary schools? I think not. Many courses in the primary ITE programmes at NSW universities are taught in a silo-like manner (Trust et al., 2017) for subjects and with a strong emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy at the expense of other subjects. Yet many schools are becoming more integrated, and inquiry focused, and this is an area university ITE programmes could reconsider. If we look at the seven general capabilities (ACARA, 2021) for example, we can see they are noted in every syllabus in the Australian Curriculum. This suggests all seven are important, however, the reality in Primary ITE is that it is only numeracy and literacy that are focused upon. What about the other five?

8 Quality University Teaching

Beyond the concerns related to the structure of ITE courses and the importance of professional experience, there is also the question of student engagement within ITE courses. The Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching Survey (QILTS, 2020) is a national, government endorsed survey of higher education. It covers student experience from commencing studies until employment after graduation and it provides interesting insights into the area of student engagement at university.

The concept of student engagement is multi-layered, complex and multi-dimensional and it is not surprising that there is no one agreed definition (Trowler, 2010). At one level it is about participation (Harper & Quale, 2009) and engagement has connections with emotions, behaviour and cognition. For the purposes of this section, I will draw upon Coates' (2007) description of engagement as 'a broad construct intended to encompass salient academic as well as certain non-academic aspects of the student experience' (p. 122). The section in QILTS (2020) surveying engagement aligns with Coates (2007) and question items include a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate online or face-to-face and opportunities to work with others and interact outside of studies. If professionals are to truly understand the nature of their work, the integrated role of quality professional experience programmes (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006) is of utmost importance and this involves engaging pre-service teachers. universities should continue to review the importance of professional experience and engaging students in coursework. I recommended a new focus in ITE is required, and if undertaken in partnership with school systems (Nicoll, 2019) it may become more innovative and effective. Schools and universities could work together on areas like mutuality, hybridity and greater collaboration (Forgasz et al., 2018). The student experience surveys (SES) (QILT, 2019, 2020) note the following samples from NSW and I have chosen to note the University of Melbourne as it carries a reputation as being innovative in Education and the leader in innovation within Australian ITE. This data is drawn from the Student Experience Surveys (SES) section that relates to 'Learner Engagement'. Overall, for education the learning engagement was 58/100 in 2019 and 46/100 in 2020 (QILT, 2020, p. 10). Figure 1 below shows the QILT score around Sydney and the closest regional universities, from 2019 (pre-COVID) and 2020 (during COVID), which caused much angst for all in education.

This data offers a window of opportunity for universities as we reconsider much in response to COVID-19. Universities are facing financial hardship and much of this in my view comes down to policy and leadership.

9 What Does the Failure of ITE Mean for Education and the Profession?

The concerns that I documented above are limited to what is happening within ITE programmes. However, it is important to realise that they can—and do—have repercussions far beyond the tertiary education system. In fact, due to the way ITE programmes are currently structured, there are concerning effects upon education and especially the status of teachers. In this section, I outline a few of these concerns, including the preponderance of teacher burnout, the rise of edu-marketing and the instrumentalisation of teachers.

9.1 Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout (Ma et al., 2020) is a very real concern, especially in a climate where teaching online is essential due to COVID-19. In 2006 I felt the effects of 'passion burnout' which can be the beginning signs of teacher burnout and we know this means many teachers walk away from the profession, especially early career teachers (Zee & Koomen, 2016). I do not wish this to happen to others. Teachers do become less energetic with the bulk of daily teaching tasks (Dicke et al., 2018)

University	2019 (/100)	2020 (/100)
Macquarie University	46	41.5
The University of Melbourne	58.5	34
University of Newcastle	59	41
Notre Dame	77.4	61.6
University of New England	27.9	21.9
University of Technology	68.5	46.9
University of N.S.W.	56	42.2
Western Sydney University	61.7	48.4
University of Wollongong	69.3	42.6

Fig. 1 A selection of QILT scores from NSW Universities for 2019 and 2020 (QILTS, 2020, pp. 12–15)

and this is a factor when considering how we might prevent teacher burn-out. Often the grind of these daily tasks weighs heavily on the shoulders of teachers in our classrooms, and this can feel very isolating, when working in a silo-like fashion. Wang et al. (2003) indicate there is a relationship between Teacher Self-Efficacy (TSE) and burnout in areas like how much energy a teacher might have. That was me in 2006! I was tired, so very tired, but was trying to teach well as I cared deeply for my students. Much of what we see in terms of teacher burnout is because PSTs are not well prepared for the profession during their ITE experience, either through what they are taught, or their opportunities to engage in professional experience.

9.2 Edu-Marketing, Learning Intentions and Success Criteria.

Added to the mix is my concern over edu-marketers (Eacott, 2017). Eacott writes ‘the uncritical acceptance and proliferation of this cult is a tragedy for Australian school leadership’ (p. 414). I’ve seen this present in two specific areas: learning intentions and success criteria. Like Eacott (2017) I am struggling to find independent reviews of the work by Hattie. Professional Development (PD) programmes for primary schools in recent times have focused on the idea of Learning Intentions and success criteria. Hattie claims his 800 meta-studies covering 80 million students over 15 years forms the basis of the PD courses offered. On the Learning Intentions website, I note TES deems him to be ‘possibly the world’s most influential education academic’. The focus of this chapter is not the process of collecting data and why many contest Hattie’s work. (See, for example ‘The Cult of Hattie and wilful blindness?’ by Darcy Moore and ‘John Hattie is Wrong’ by Slavin Bergen (2017) and also his ‘How to Engage in Pseudoscience with Real Data: A criticism of John Hattie’s Arguments in “Visible Learning” from the perspective of a statistician’).

Instead, my focus is on why his ideas on learning intentions and success criteria may work against the pedagogical approach of inquiry (MacKenzie, 2018) and teaching students how to think. Firstly, the use of learning intentions and success criteria is a narrowing approach and offers a linear model with very little flexibility. Alternatively, inquiry, which is a more inductive approach to pedagogy, is evident in primary syllabus documents with inquiry questions in Geography and History syllabus documents (NESA, 2021c, 2021d). A closer look at the Harvard Zero Project, Cultures of Thinking (Richhardt, 2015) which is designed to foster reasoning, reflection and thinking amongst students, is a well-researched and supported pedagogy. I suggest reading a blog by Greg Cumming-Should Learning Intentions be questions? (https://gregcumming.weebly.com/blog/archives/05-2021)

As a data-generating, quantitative-oriented researcher, Hattie is influencing policy, and the ideas that underpin learning intentions and success criteria are working against primary pre-service teachers from succeeding with successfully engaging students in the twenty-first century where creativity and inquiry are written into the syllabus.

10 A Better Way of Doing ITE: Making Use of Influencers and Activists?

I often think of the desire to be an influencer. Howard (2002, p. 55) noted the potential of the idea of an 'influencer' in areas of social media, political campaigns, and the rise of 'hypermedia organizations' when conducting business, but the role of PSTs as influencers is unexplored. Influencers can adapt new communication technology to conduct the 'business of social organization over large areas and disparate time zones, and at all hours of the day' (Howard, 2002, p. 552). This suggests a very powerful medium has emerged in the area of sharing ideas and information—and this medium could be leveraged for ITE too.

Robinson and Anderson (2020) note we live in a networking society. There are links between this idea of a networked society, influencers and the idea of 'ubiquitous learning' as described by Kalantzis and Cope (2018), which suggests a way forward with theory–practice connections. There is also potential for action researchers (Kalantzis & Cope, 2018). Networking and social media can provide learning opportunities; as part of this invention can be fostered. This aligns with the 4Cs for twenty-first-century learning (Anderson & Jefferson, 2019) and there are connections with ideas like Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition (SAMR) (Keane, 2012). For example, Cohen et al. (2013) suggest learning in the classroom is now ubiquitous by nature and this is influencing PSTs across the world. Pianfetti (2009) offers an insightful chapter in Cope and Kalantzis (2008) and suggests 'Technology has the power to inspire us to transform the way we live, the way we teach, and the way we learn' (p. 93). I do however think this is an area ITE could review to better leverage technology to encourage creativity and innovation amongst PSTs.

From my observations on Instagram since 2018, I can see that Gen-Z and Millennials often wish to be influencers for positive change, with many PSTs being part of this group. They describe themselves to me, in tutorials, as activists and I can see evidence for this in my daily interactions. Yet it is not easy finding research in this area. Wolf (2020) found in her study on Gen-Z and social media that, '… Micro-influencers outranked social media influencers in six main areas including trust, authenticity, purchase intentions, similar lifestyles, similar interests, and being "personable"' (p. 9).

I think if this idea is embraced in ITE, there is real potential for change in areas as diverse as social justice, the digital divide, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and greater equality for women. For example, in STEM, it is predicted over the next 50 years that careers in this field will be very important for Australia's viability. However, women are not taking up studying in areas of

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. We know the current STEM policies are not working as well as we had hoped (Murphy et al., 2020) for women as they are not moving into this field (Australian Academy of Science, 2021) as expected. I notice on social media many primary teachers post on STEM and they make it look engaging and fun such as Kylie Burrett (SPLAT-3D on Instagram and Tik Tok), Meridith Ebbs on Instagram (@imerinet), Adam Hill (Adam Hill Ed on Instagram) and Cath Williams (cathwilliams05 on Instagram). What if social media posts by many teachers embracing STEM start influencing parents / students / girls with career choices. I think embracing the notion of being an influencer could be a more effective way of 'advertising' careers for girls in STEM. Investing in our pre-service teachers in this way today will benefit us tomorrow.

Another aspect of ITE that is not well leveraged is the use of technology to support the development of Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Trust et al., 2017). By using social media, I have been able to establish relationships which support collegiality and authentic opportunities to develop PLNs. Part of my reasoning was I had noticed that PSTs often wished to join these networks, but were daunted by the idea. For example, on Twitter, PSTs tell me they cannot keep up and they fear teachers will not welcome them. I for one actively work to bust this myth through Twitter chats (@TheNewBrewAssocC, formerly @PSTchat founder Stephy Salazar. Consequently, I have tried to 'go to' the pre-service teachers, meeting them where they are at. I see this as an innovative way to address the 7 graduate standards. I think our answers for networking require an understanding of pre-service teachers and their experiences—and we need to meet PSTs where they are, not where we want them to be—and that might be on Twitter, TikTok and Instagram.

11 Conclusion

The profession of teaching has often been one where many people impose their ideas on teachers. Even at University I watch the PSTs faces and listen to them in class as they express this feeling of a loss of 'agency' or a loss of the power to act as they choose. Agency (Ahearn, 1999), or the power for teachers to act on a global scale is not like it was in the year 2006 when I presented my first academic paper in New Zealand. *I think it is far worse.* I often toss and turn these ideas in my mind, just as Dewey (1916, 1938) did and I cannot help but to keep thinking that if we continue to not listen to and indeed silence PSTs in ITE we will never change the game.

In favour of PSTs who tend to be millennials and Gen-Z I see many qualities in these generations which I admire. These qualities are present in my co-hosts for the New Brew Association to include a website and podcast (https://www.thenewbrew.org/) I lead. Generally, it seems to me they have such a no-nonsense attitude and a desire to act on areas of concern, or use their agency to agitate for ideas on social justice and the environment, such as Global Warming. Older people often say to me, 'Oh, they photograph everything! Tsk tsk!' Well, I think of course they do, because we live in the twenty-first century and the idea of ‘ubiquitous learning’ (Kalantzis & Cope, 2018) tells us teachers are embracing their mobile devices to share digital threads (Nicoll, 2019) from their classrooms on social media. Digital literacies are part of our national ideas on teaching for active citizenship in the twenty-first century and are in the Seven General Capabilities (AITSL, 2021) appearing in every syllabus in the primary programme. By the same token, other twenty-first-century oriented skills I also see in this generation are a capacity to communicate, a desire to be creative, innovative and there is a strong sense of social justice for others such as indigenous students. On a final note, and this one really gets me thinking, is this desire to succeed in practice and be successful going to help us? Maybe wanting to be an influencer is a good thing?

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Everyone Has Been to School so Everyone Has an Opinion: Why Memories of School Matter

Naomi Barnes and Rebecca English

Abstract The history of schools and schooling, indeed of education, is rarely discussed when considering the oft-overlooked question of "What is the purpose of schools?". Similarly, when considering the role of schools, many viewpoints provided are overly glowing, and tend to overlook the many shortcomings and failings of this system. Here, these issues are brought to the fore, so that those engaged in the practice of education can look at an unvarnished view of the system of which they are a part.

The role of the media within the narrowing of discourse is outlined, with a clear link to the inclusion and promotion of parents as activists and agential actors within this process. Each of these forces and histories is important for those within education to consider, noting the historical relevance of each, and noting the manner in which they impact upon present day action.

1 Introduction

Education has come under considerable scrutiny in recent years with moves to home learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, close inspection through two Royal Commissions, reported drops in the Australian rankings (Olsson, 2021), and targeted gaps are widening rather than shrinking (Holland, 2018). Despite this, the briefs which accompany policy adjustments and professional learning suites of the past few decades, suggest that the development of education initiatives is to improve education. So why are people choosing alternative education options and why are initiatives not reaping the intended results? As Lupton and Hayes (2021) argue in their book *Great Mistakes in Education Policy And How to Avoid Them in the Future*, the underlying economic, social, and cultural problems in societies based on western governance systems, such as Australia, cannot be undone by education policy, nor by ensuring highly educated teachers. In reality, Lupton and Hayes (2021) assert the policies which have been intended to address inequality have sharpened their effects

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because they have been unable to sufficiently or effectively address gaps. This is because those governing education have determined the problems that are holding students back, not those on the ground, in the communities and on the chalk face. In other words, parents/carers and teachers are *told* what the problems are and are rarely invited to explain what they have witnessed. For example, schools and communities have long been led to believe that success in subjects such as literacy and numeracy will pull them out of poverty or disadvantage; however, when the reported gaps widen the subsequent blame is directed at the schools who enact policy, not those who make who made policy promises (Standring, 2017). This is not fair or helpful.

Even with this, there is an appetite in the Australian public sphere to blame teachers for the failings of the school system. Simply, the public sphere are the places and spaces that people gather to deliberate on social issues that inform policy, and one of the key spaces is the media. Teacher, rather than policy or systemic, blame, is often seen through the clickbait articles that grace the education sections of the legacy (or news) media (Wilkinson & MacDonald, 2020), but also through the subsequent antagonisms on social media (Woods & Baroutsis, 2019) where these news articles and reportings are deliberated. A report out of Monash University (Heffernan et al., 2019) demonstrated that this unsympathetic public sphere debate has a connection to low teacher morale. It is important, as a consequence, that the representation of teachers in the media is an important consideration when ensuring a sustainable and healthy workforce.

Advocacy that works to ensure teachers are accurately represented in the media does have a blindspot, however, and that is why the Australian public might consume negative portrayals of teachers in the first place. The media, especially in an age where new media is severely undercutting legacy media's ability to report the news, relies heavily on people consuming "clickbait" arguments. While the Newscorp driven media has perfected the art of pseudo debate where experts are pitted against conspiracy theorists and fact deniers, there are still experiences in people's lives that lead them to click on news articles that highlight education's broken promises. No matter how often people are educated in critical consumption of media, or the media is held accountable for their representation of schools, the audience for consuming negative representations of teachers is still large enough for those stories to continue to be published. In this chapter, we stay with this trouble (Haraway, 1988) and ask where that desire might come from.

In the following sections, we will consider the experiences of families and community who might blame school for their shortcomings in society by looking at *the school* in personal and generational memory. *The school* is different to individual schools and teachers. *The school* is an allegorical device for the systemic failings across the history of western schooling, the institutional discrimination that has been embedded with every decision made that puts colonial patriarchal classism at its centre. As we go forward in this chapter, it is important to remember that *the school* is not the hardworking ethical teacher as a person, but they are the public face of the social metaphor that many who despise schooling point towards. *The school* is the embodiment of system versus individual contradiction—the parent who thinks teachers have too many holidays while singing the praises those their kids have.

We argue that memory of *the school* leads many to engage with media reporting on perceived and actual failures of schooling. To do this, we first consider the promises schooling has made to Anglo society over time and combine that history with the promises schooling has broken more recently. We argue that there is a *hyperreal cultural curriculum* (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998) of *the school*, that remembers the generations of systemic failures and individual pain. We suggest that this plays into families' and communities' consciousnesses when they decide to click on an article that criticises schools and teachers or engage in public derision on social media. In the final section, we consider how the systemic role families have in schools has changed over the past decade and how the effects of that change might also lead the public to click on inflammatory news and social media.

2 The history of the purpose of schooling in Western culture

Schooling in Western culture is undergoing a time of transition and this is a reason for clashes between teachers and the general public. One of the initial purposes of schooling, even before the development of systemic, industrialised schooling in the nineteenth century was to civilise the student and learn their place in the world. Schooling was intended to help the young person inculcate their culture and hold on to the myths and legends of the identity they were born into (Postman, 1996). A more contemporary purpose is inscribed in the Australian curriculum: to "become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens" (ACARA, n.d.), able to challenge the discourses of their time and the world in which they are living. Social theories that suggest the way an institution is initiated is the way it will develop over time so developing critical and creative thinkers is at odds with the original purpose. These contradictory impulses are at the heart of schooling (Postman, 1996). Below we trace the development of what the school has meant in Western society to contextualise our discussion of the ramifications of this transition.

Throughout most of human history, young people did not attend schools. Rather, they worked with their parents on their parents' trades and apprenticed with others in the community who could teach them useful skills. It was only the rich, those who were destined to be clerics and burghers who went to a school and were educated (Aries, 1962; Postman, 1994). Wealthy scholars had no reason to change society, so were educated in how to maintain it. During the Industrial Revolution, this situation began to change. Victorian-era reformers worked hard to ensure children were barred from being recruited into difficult, dangerous, and dirty work. On the success of their social justice agenda, a care issue arose as their parents, who were still working in factories, needed a place for them to go during the day. Schools developed a contradictory dual purpose—partly as a solution to a social justice success conundrum, injecting schools with a social justice agenda, (Neuman, 2019) but drawing upon the ancient purpose of schooling to maintain the structure of society. This historical reasoning that led to the creation of early Western schools is still part of their contemporary fibre because they have never been dismantled and rebuilt.

Until the eighteenth century, schools were not intended for children because childhood was something that did not exist as a social institution until labour reforms differentiated between children and adults (Ariès, 1962). They were instead invented for social discipline and, as David Graeber (2015) suggests, an opportunity to remake the world. This discourse persists today. You do not have to look too far to note a piece of research recommending that their field and findings become a part of the school curriculum (see for example Notley et al., 2021). Additionally, discourses that make children responsible for the problems of society are across the popular media, especially around the climate crisis (see for example Bakare, 2020). Society is at a time of transition where the children are being made responsible for civilising or fixing society and schools, being the social institutions that are tasked to govern the child-driven "civilising", are undoubtedly caught in the crossfire.

Historically, one of the main drivers of education is the idea that children must learn to control themselves and their impulses. Schooling, by its nature, values quietness, contemplation, high levels of abstraction and thought, a delay of gratification, and a regulation of the body. Success in school is intimately tied to discipline, and something teachers must incorporate with their lessons.

> The capacity to control and overcome one's nature became one of the defining characteristics of adulthood and therefore one of the essential purposes of education [so that] centuries of children have been subjected to an education designed to make them 'good', that is, to make them suppress their natural energies (Postman, 1982, pp. 46–47).

The centuries-old social agreement that the education system's role is to develop a disciplined child coupled with widely documented abuses of that role (as discussed below) have led to legislative and policy developments that have changed the nature of teaching and schooling. However, parents, by reading the media reports about some teachers who have taken the purpose of discipline too far and the schools which have protected them, have understandably become more worried about what happens inside schools. In response, the education system has developed policies and procedures which have curtailed the power of the schools and increased the accountability of teachers to parents. Which brings us back to the paradox at the beginning of this section: teaching has changed but the experiences of the parents have not.

This contradiction plays out in education discourses which include both teachers and the general public. By and large, contemporary teachers are aware the system has changed and worked hard to embody that shift in the purpose of schooling. Unfortunately, those in the public who have not consumed educational theory, through initial teacher education or professional development opportunities, and are often ignorant of the change. They bring memories of their own schooling to the conversation, and often spreading misinformation while imagining *the school*. These incongruities in expectations, and visions for schooling are at the heart of relationships between families, communities, and schools that lead to dissatisfaction with decisions that schools make. In recent decades, policy changes and new media have blurred the border between schools and families meaning old memories of schooling are more likely to turn up on the school grounds. Contemporary schooling is experiencing a time of transition where new communication tools are reshaping society, including schools, and the roles of teachers and school leadership are having to change again. Transition is always difficult and raises ire inside and outside the school fence as memories of school clash with realities of the contemporary institution.

Having given this brief overview of what the history of schooling suggests about the miscommunication of purpose between teachers and parents, the next section outlines what contemporary education research has observed is the media's understanding of the purpose of schools, because it is the mediation of the deliberation that leads people to click on articles which misrepresent teachers but reach into memories of *the school*.

3 What does the media say is the purpose of schools?

How teacher and school quality has been represented in the media is a popular field in Australian education research. This research concentrates on how the media creates what Steinberg and Kincheloe (1998) refer to as a *hyperreal cultural curriculum* or the way media representations shape people's lives. The hyperreal cultural curriculum of compulsory education in Australian (and internationally) is dominated by negative media representations about concepts as diverse as: (1) the culture in schools, (2) the quality of teachers, (3) the alternatives to mainstream schools (including dropping out altogether and home educating), (4) inclusiveness of the curriculum, and (5) any number of other moral messages that are unable to be classified in the preceding list. One of the ways the hyperreal cultural curriculum plays out is in representations of teachers and teacher identity.

Within the broader media, there are a number of teacher tropes: The stern, traditional teacher; the bad or lazy teacher; The "cool teacher"; the outsider who becomes a teacher; and most pervasively the "superteacher" (Ahn & Leggo, 2019). The untrustworthy representations of teachers are used to mobilise public discussion in the broader media landscape (including new media) to introduce standardisation and accountability measures, reducing the autonomy of teachers within society (Watson & Barnes, 2021). In other words, the media taps into the hyperreal curriculum of teaching to develop their stories. For example, Baroutsis (2019), in asking journalists directly about how they create stories about teaching, explained the struggle between the media mentalities of factualism, or the need to directly link to solid evidence, and sensationalism that lead to reductionist news articles. The reductionist framing of the representation of teachers in the media is also taken up in a more fine-grained manner by Mockler (2020) when exploring how these representations affect policy. The analysis of the representation of *teacher* quality versus *teaching* quality found that the print media plays a key role in linking media stories of teachers to policy discussions around teacher accountability. Other education researchers have looked at the role of lobby groups and think tanks in deliberately developing the representation of teachers in the media. For example, Lingard (2016) argued that the think tanks have become powerful bridges between the teaching profession and policymakers. He also notes that education academics, who have a deeper understanding of the nuances of the teaching profession, are taking a back seat to the lobbyists.

While the studies into the representation of education are provocative and present food for thought about the role of the media in education policy development, very little in this research considers why negative stories about teachers attract the public attention. Social media research can map these stories, from education researchers to the media and onto the public, (Jenkins et al., 2015) in ways that have been theorised but historically difficult to show. Social media research allows insight into ways the public responds to different media stories to account for why the media might select certain sensationalist terms to represent teachers.

For example, grief is a clickable commodity in the Reading Wars. Barnes (2021) conducted a forensic analysis of the legacy and new media debates around the teaching of phonics in the early years of traditional schooling. The study found that wedge issues (or issues that spark intense debate within the policy sphere so lend themselves to sensationalist media logics) were privileged in media reports. The phonics wedge issue saw parents writing and sharing multiple blog posts about their children being unable to read, highlighting a discourse of grief. It is this grief that media articles used to attract clicks. While those sensationalist logics that exploit grief might be reductionist, the issue remains that grief is core to *the school* and why negative representations of teachers get so much traction.

4 Where does the grief come from?

What the literature on representations of teachers in the media fails to consider is that the articles which misrepresent teachers are clicked on for a reason. Distrust of schools runs deep in the social fabric of Australian society, not just for ideological and sociological reasons, but because schools have been continuously violent, and continue to be so. This violence is both symbolic (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990 for detailed theory) and literal. These stories of violence end up in the media alongside the ideological representations of teachers' role in society. We suggest that these instances of violence have not made it into research associated with media representations because they have been corralled into corners of education that most agree are problematic: issues of racism, sexism, inequality in funding, and disability. As these issues affect much of the wider population and are central to *the school* in one form or another, it is important to not have a selective memory about them when discussing representations of teachers in the media. It is important to not position *the school* as a passive actor, or an institution that can be shaped by just the right shift in mindset, the regulation of media, or a tweak to policy. *The school* is an actor that has shaped the lives of the people who were students and this power is why those who are the face of *the school* are often the focus of mistrust.

We only need to look to recent Royal Commissions in which school has heavily featured: the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/) and Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/). While it is individuals who committed the acts of violence that came to light during these Royal Commissions, the mechanism of *the school*, enabled decades of cover up that allowed the abuse and neglect to continue. For example, while the actions of the Catholic Church were the focus of institutional neglect and abuse in cases associated with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the fact remains that the acts of violence were committed in catholic schools. Furthermore, as the Royal Commission continued, sexual abuse was revealed in all schooling sectors, making it much more difficult to explain away the violence as based in the Church when the common denominator was, and is, schools.

One thing that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has highlighted is that *the school* in institutional violence is not contained within social categories. The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability revealed instances of neglect and abuse by teachers and schools; however, as the violence reported was associated with a particular social category, the disability sector, the wider community was able to dismiss the issue as related to people with a disability more broadly than schooling. In other words, education suffers from the same dismissal of issues that phrases like "not all men" ignore in issues of misogyny and "all lives matter" associated with issues of racism.

Furthermore, schools have become a battleground for the sensitive and appropriate representation and safety of children of diverse genders and sexualities. The 2010 Safe Schools (https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/safeschools.aspx?Redirect=2) resourcing in Victoria, Australia, acknowledged the need for a programme to ensure "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) students, and are free of discrimination". The public and academic logic associated with the campaign recognised that schools have been unsafe places for LGBTI students and teachers who have experienced systematic bullying. The extension of that logic, on the back of conservative religious campaigning to remove explicit connection to LGBTI students in the package, is that if academic research has found a need for a distinct reference to issues of children's safety is related to gender and sexuality, then the removal of that from the official package suggests that the issue still exists within schools.

Likewise, the role of missions, and by extension formal schooling, in the removal of language, culture, and bodies of First Nations people in Australia is widely acknowledged in public and curriculum-based education about Australia's history. As an act of New Imperialism to smooth the process of colonisation, the Oxford English Dictionary was developed for deliberate cultural genocide by removing language from colonised communities (Winchester, 2009). The management of language is a core tool of English language education and foundational discourse for literacy. Policy in colonised countries requires a standardisation of language and is still central to the Australian Curriculum: English which dictates the teaching of Standard Australian English through the three strands of Language, Literature, and Literacy. First Nations peoples relate stories of how not just children, but culture and language were stolen from their people (Fowler et al., 2019). Furthermore, reports of mass graves under schools in Canada (Austen & Bilefsky, 2021) have raised questions about what archaeology might reveal about Australian missions. Teachers must acknowledge the necessity for culturally responsive pedagogies (Rigney, 2020) in context of this history and an understanding that the grief caused by the colonial project is not historical, but ever present in the lives of First Nations families.

These are high profile cases of institutional violence and grief within schooling that need reconciling and must constitute a part of any discussion about the role of schooling and trust. There are other memories of schooling that also play out in collective memory that should inform and understand the school-family dynamic. For example, a parent may not trust schools because of the way they experienced schooling. Imagine being asked to "come to the principal's office" when the last time this parent was in that position was when they were being disciplined. Memory of school does not simply exist in the incidents, but in the socialisation and development of individual parents, this includes different experiences of parents from socially and culturally diverse backgrounds. This is often dismissed as "everyone has been to school, so everyone has an opinion on schooling" without looking at the socialisation process that leads people to feel like they need to have an opinion.

Mapping them together, high profile acts of violence perpetrated within the school system as a meta-representation of *the school* prompts new questions about why the public might mistrust teachers, and subsequently click on media that misrepresents the wider population of teachers. In the education policy that has worked to stop the violence enacted by schools, parents have been drawn into a new role in the school-community relationship. This has created a new social dynamic that schools and teachers must be aware of.

5 The Responsibilisation of Parents

The question of who is responsible for a child's education is core to the development of parent oversight in schools. By *parent oversight* we mean governance processes like the development of independent public schools which need school boards, but also the neoliberal rhetoric of school choice. School choice does not simply end with enrolment. It has also crept into school decisions about pedagogy and curriculum. The increased accountability of teachers and schooling has been deeply explored in the education research literature (see for example the special issue Holloway et al., 2017). Less has been done on shifts in the education policy environment where parents and community are affected by the culture of responsibilisation, though Saltmarsh and colleagues (2019) touch on it and Pelkey et al. (2021) have explored its impact on principals' work.

Responsibilisation refers to the risky work of living in late neoliberal, late-stage capitalist societies where success and even a good standard of living are no longer guaranteed, and people are increasingly made responsible for their own experiences of success or failure. This theoretical lens asserts that the responsibility for the management of that risk is transferred from the collective instruments of the state, for example schools and hospitals, to the individual. The change has been to a form of self-governance and individual subjectivity (cf. Keddie, 2016; Rose, 1996, 2007). Responsibilisation is generally used to refer to the privatisation of all parts of the economy, so that the individual bears both the losses and the gains of their own decisions. Individuals, and corporations, take on the roles that were previously considered the domain of the caring, social-distributive welfare state (Shamir, 2008). As Peters (2017) notes, it is seen in the rise of a new form of individualism, one in which "individuals take care of themselves through enhanced choice-making in the marketplace" (p. 140). Similarly, the state forces responsibility and responsibilisation on the individual, on families, and on professionals. It steps back from active social provision to devise juridical frameworks that set up the rules governing social distribution and set criteria for their continual monitoring and performativity. For O'Malley (2009), responsibilisation refers to the process of subjects being rendered individually responsible for tasks that previously were the preserve of a, usually but not always, state agency.

As such, school choice is a responsibilisation mechanism that has changed the way schools and families interact. School choice has not only shifted economic issues in schooling, but social as well. School choice essentially means the government has laid the responsibility for educating children at the feet of the parents. While the market implies school choice is open to everyone, geographic and financial restrictions limit the free exercise of choice. Nevertheless, general cultural discourses that engage with a parent's responsibility for their child's success as a person are also echoed in policy rhetoric about schools and school choice. School choice essentially indicates that the parent is responsible for the successful education of their child and that mechanism, for those unable to choose the school, can play out in how parents choose to advocate for change within a school. Greater engagement of parents, carers, and community members with education issues is encouraged politically because parents are the stronger voting bloc—what Olmedo and Wilkins (2017) characterizse as a new state-citizen relationship that positions parents to become actors in education. As Saltmarsh and colleagues (2019) explain, the ideal relationship between parents and schools is communication about children's educational progress and well-being and increasingly parents are weighing in on how that might play out (Barnes, 2021). Unfortunately, often those discussions are disciplinary in nature, leading to debates about who is responsible for a child's success—the teacher for explaining knowledge at school or the parent for practising it at home; if a parent does not like the processes at the school, they are welcome to go elsewhere. In other words, parents are being drawn into becoming overseers of schools as they deliberate and navigate those conversations leading to new cultural formations that have led to tension between school and home. For example, it is seen in the parents' competition for opportunities for their children through private tutoring (Doherty & Dooley, 2018) and the need to ensure their child has every chance of success, whatever the cost.

Responsibilisation is a conceptual lens that suggests individuals act rationally to further their own interests. As Peters (2017) writes the individual becomes a fully autonomous, self-interested agent concerned with what Harman describes as "responsible for navigating the social realm using rational choice and cost-benefit calculation to the express exclusion of all other values and interests" (Harman, 2010, p. 38). These interests are the responsibility of the individual and are expected to be managed through rational actions; however, when a parent makes a choice about their child, those choices are navigated by agents acting in their self-interest and they are less able to make rational decisions that teachers and principals make about multiple children. Hence another clash of responsibility that results in miscommunication and clickbait for news articles.

If parents don't trust schools, but do trust the media, it is no wonder that parents agitate for more power over the schooling process. Additionally, if policy has positioned parents to engage with schools as rational agents of choice and change, the information they receive through the media will factor heavily into that decision-making. This information is not simply at the point of enrolment but at every point of decision a school reaches. Examples of parent intervention in schools beyond enrolment are through school boards, but also through policy advocacy like that seen in the phonics debate and private tutoring. Teacher unions have also reported parents intervening in schools via social media (Burke, 2019). Therefore, any discussion of representation of schooling in the media must consider how to reconcile the increasing presence of families in school decision-making. This has been a difficult road for principals who have had to juggle the many new communications outlets and their widespread distribution of the allegory of *the school* (Pelkey et al., 2021). Basically, the floodgates have been open for a number of decades now, and schools and teachers must work out how to work with families as a core part of the community. Families are no longer a stakeholder on the outside of the school fence and those stakeholders come with generations of memory about the role of school in society that may not match neatly with the conversations had in staffrooms and professional learning opportunities.

6 Moving Forward

Today teachers are working to navigate a transitional period that has emerged via changes in communication practices and a broader dysfunctional governance of society: schools were created to discipline children and by extension society; schools abused that position; rather than revamping schooling to ensure children were not maltreated, neoliberal manoeuvres established parent oversight of school through school choice. As parents cannot be controlled through accountability measures, teachers and schools now need to navigate a relationship where they are answerable to people whose experiences of school have been sub-par. It is not as simple as the well-worn teacher adage "everyone has been to school, so everyone has an opinion". Humans have some experience of many institutions, but as schooling is compulsory, it is an institution that holds people's multiple selves together. Schooling helps people navigate their individual identities, make decisions about what is normal and abnormal, and increasingly learn to tolerate identities they might not have beforehand. Each generation experiences a different cultural reality and the multiple generations of people both teaching at, and sending their children to, school have different ideas about what school should be. Over time the populations who have experienced the key documented forms of violence have been from social groups that Westernised schooling has sought to control. Children with disabilities were until very recently excluded from mainstream schooling (and still integration is the policy but not necessarily the practice). The bullying of children over gender and sexuality is an extension of a social issue that insists on cis-gendered ideas of reproduction. Missions were set up and children were stolen as part of a colonial project to control and wipe out the culture that did not meet the ideas of approved Westernised, English-speaking customs. These are very recent memories within the general population and these memories form a part of the identity a parent and community bring to their interactions with schools.

While the media engages with moral panics about testing scores, many parents are removing their children from schools where scores are the focus. Steiner/Waldorf schooling is one of the fastest growing school movements in the world (Stehlik, 2019). Similarly, the growth of home education through the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries suggests there is an issue among parents with the ways schooling is conducted (see Lois, 2013). Teachers concerned about the emphasis on test scores should see this movement as a support for their ideas and find ways to work with these parents to establish indicators of progress. If parents are being hungry for change in government schooling and are finding ways to "counter the increasingly negative consequences associated with a narrow, test-driven, and essentialist view of education" (Chistolini, 2014, p.47), teachers could see this as an empowering support for what the nature of school is, rather than a binary attack on public education. We would respectfully suggest a wider engagement with alternative education settings where democratic decision-making and social justice are at the core of schools' governance might be a way for school decision-makers and parents to find common ground in redefining what education is for contemporary society.

For example, parents are choosing schools, like democratic and alternative schools, where the school is positioned as a part of the community, rather than places the children go while parents are at work. The placing of children at the centre of the school, instead of teachers and curriculum, can respectfully encourage engagement (see Postman & Winegartner, 1969 for a discussion of why this is important) and drive self-determination in young people (Riley, 2021). In addition, the facilitating of parent councils, like those undertaken in the democratic schools movement, is another way for parents and teachers to see themselves as equal partners with young people in their development through schools. In these schools, parents and teachers collaborate on curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment as well as the socialisation activities. In some schools, teachers visit homes with qualitative reports about student progress. An example of a government school like this in Australia is Lindfield Learning Village in Sydney.

Without some form of reconciliation or acknowledgement of the institutional violence wrought by *the school* and because of this they may feel pressure from the current policy environments to choose alternatives. After all, they are handing over their most precious children to an institution that has centuries of violence baked in. An empowered teacher is an empathetic teacher who works patiently with the parents in their orbit, acknowledges the difficult relationship parents have with schooling, and supports them to see the changes that you as that individual teacher brings to the profession. Because those clickbait articles are about *the school* not you, but the more "yous" there are, the more *the school* will change.

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Understanding Citizenship, Supporting Students and Teachers, and Pushing Back

Marc Pruyn, Elham Foomani, Urmee Chakma, and Lisa Cary

Abstract While 'teacher-bashing' and even the 'teacher-proofing' of schools and curricula have always been a concern, it took on added resonance from the late 1970s as neoliberalism (an even more aggressive laissez-faire form of free market capitalism than had been the norm since World War II) began to hit its stride in the Regan/Thatcher 1980s (Apple, M. W., 1979). What correspondence theories of the hidden curriculum miss. The Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies, 5(2), 101–112.; Giroux, Educational Theory 38:61–75, 1988). This has hardly abated since and has been even more vociferously enacted in today's climate of authoritarian approaches to and views towards economics, governing, and teaching (McLaren, Post13 digital Science and Education 1:311–334, 2019). Against this backdrop 'blaming the teacher' (while simultaneously subjecting public schools to almost endless austerity measures), we have been researching how teachers understand their own 'lived citizenship identities' in terms of building collective forms of connection and belonging (Cary & Pruyn, 2021a). The findings presented in this chapter come from a larger international, multi-year, qualitative research endeavour (The Citizenship Project) that has sought to understand the citizenship identities of youth, teachers, parents, and academics.

Our theoretical orientation draws on the philosophy and practise of 'critical pedagogy' (Darder, 1991; Freire, 1970) as well as theorisations of citizenship that both aspire to and bring about social justice and equity (Cary & Pruyn, 2021a, b; Freire, 1970; Heggart, 2020, 2021; Ross, 2017; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, 2004b). These orientations have helped us to understand and theorise our findings around the formation of 'lived citizenship identities' (Cary & Pruyn, 2021a, b). In this

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chapter, we present our findings from our teacher, teacher educator, and educational researcher participants. Through an elaboration of our three thematic findings— ‘understanding citizenship’s multiplicitous nature’, ‘experiencing citizenship education’, and ‘linking citizenship, power, and liberation’—we discuss how participants, and we as researchers, are understanding this current authoritarian neoliberal moment, and we all, as citizen pedagogues, might push back against anti-teacher and anti-intellectual sentiments and policies. We conclude by addressing ways that a ‘transformative citizenship’ education might support teachers and students as they explore the learning and teaching of citizenship as a political and democratic act.

1 Studying Citizenship

The research presented in this chapter is part of a larger project within which we are seeking to explore how different groups of people understand the concept of ‘citizenship’, and if and how they have created their own self-defined ‘citizenship communities’ to build a sense of belonging, inclusion, and resilience. The groups of participants we are working with are teachers and academics, youth and children, and parents and communities. Through this research, we seek not just to understand, but also to *amplify* and *support* these different groups, and the ‘citizenship communities’ of which, we posit, they might be members.

These are tricky times within which to consider notions of ‘citizenship’, belonging, and inclusion (Cary & Pruyn, 2021a, b; Cary et al., 2015). With the rise of the authoritarian right world-wide, inroads against democracy, hate and violence towards marginalised communities, the increased rejection of rationality and science, anger towards migrants and refugees, and a global pandemic, ‘tricky times’ might be an understatement. But that has been our empirical agenda.

In the research presented in this chapter, we specifically engaged with teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers, as we sought answers, understandings, and possible motivational guidance in understanding ‘lived citizenship’ (Cary & Pruyn, 2021a) in these times; not just in relation to themselves, but also as they saw and understood schools and students. There were 21 participants in this research, currently living in Australia or the US, but originally from five different continents. At the time, they were all teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers; more than half identified as women; and 60% were white while 40% were People of Colour.

Drawing on a critical qualitative methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Geertz, 1983; Holman Jones, 2007; Van Maanen, 1988), we conducted two focus group and eight one-on-one semi-structured interviews across a three-year period using open-ended question prompts (Galletta & Cross, 2013). After transcribing the data, we followed Bryman’s (2016) steps of thematic analysis. Using NVivo, we started by open coding the data, then the codes sharing common elements were grouped into themes, and finally, higher order themes were created to outline our findings and discussion. Our analysis involved both thematic data-driven and theory-driven means of analysis and was an iterative process of coding, meaning making, and re/organising themes (Stake, 1995).

In the following section, theoretical underpinnings, we elaborate what we feel are the three broad goal areas of different approaches to citizenship education based on our understandings of the literature. Next, we share our thematic findings based on our analyses of the data we collected from teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers. Finally, we discuss these findings in relation to our theorisation and what this might imply for the practice, and potential, of a 'transformative' citizenship education that centres both teachers and learners in its practice. As this volume puts the agency, learning, self-advocacy, and empowerment of teachers at the heart of efforts to democratise schooling, so this chapter hopes to centralise how we might create 'citizenship communities' that help us all to find belonging and inclusion.

2 Theoretical Underpinnings

2.1 Citizenship and Education

Understandings of citizenship and the implications of these understandings are complex and varied. The concept of citizenship is fluid and changes in specific contexts and at different times. While traditional citizenship is defined in the 'formal relationship' between people and their nation states, contemporary debates on citizenship frame it in terms of its liberating versus controlling characteristics (Fischman & Hass, 2012; Fletcher, 2015; Ross & Vinson, 2013). The shift from traditional ideas of citizenship emerged in the eighteenth century. Up until then, citizenship was understood as a natural, innate set of dispositions, which belonged to a specific class of people; accordingly, workers, people of colour, women, and those who did not have literacy were labelled as 'passive' or even 'non-citizens' and were, thus, excluded from the rights and privileges that 'active' citizens carried. In order to acquire an active status, these passive/non-citizen groups had to organise, push back against legislation, and strive to change the laws regulating their status (Wallerstein, 2003).

The goals of citizenship and citizenship education are also varied. The meaning citizenship carries, and the goals it serves, are often subject to interpretation, framed by polarising perspectives, and are highly contested. However, from our perspective, three main streams of understanding of citizenship are discernible within this theoretical, philosophical, and empirical melange. The first stream views its purpose as that of maintaining the status quo and the inequitable relationships of power that entrench, protect, and further advance it (Fischman & Hass, 2012; Fletcher, 2015; Ross & Vinson, 2013). We call this the 'neoliberal' vision of citizenship. The second stream sees its purpose as mandating the responsibilities and defining the rights of citizens (McLaughlin, 1992; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a). This 'responsibilities/rights' vision of citizenship encourages enactment of these goals through learning and engagement. The final vision of citizenship, 'citizenship for social justice', agrees with but builds upon the 'responsibility/rights' vision, adding additional layers of criticality and call for social activism for change (Cary & Pruyn, 2021a, b; Freire, 1970; Heggart, 2020; Ross, 2017; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, 2004b). These three streams of understanding, and the visions at their centre, are elaborated in the following sections, as we contextually situate our research within the literature.

2.2 *Neoliberal Citizenship Education to Maintain or Expand an Inequitable Social Order*

Citizenship has been used by those in power to maintain, reinforce, and even extend the power of, the status quo. Traditionally, citizenship has often historically been exclusionary, drawing on classism, racism, sexism, and homophobia to maintain the current state of affairs. As Fletcher (2015) posits, citizenship operating 'at the level of formal relationships' has been widely affected by neoliberal globalisation, leading to the emergence of 'caste status' or 'sub-citizenship', which he labels as not true citizenship at all, but as a parallel existence subject to vast inequalities. Conceptualisations such as these, of democracy and knowledge as a means to constrain civic participation, as Ross and Vinson (2013) note, foster 'conceptions of the learner as passive; democratic citizenship as a spectator project; and ultimately the maintenance of status quo inequalities in society' (p. 10).

Feltcher (2015), in discussing neoliberalism's influence on citizenship identity formation posits there are three categories of citizens produced under neoliberalism: the 'traditional citizen', with basic rights; the 'ethno-national level' who identifies with the majority ethnicity (usually in problematic ways); and, finally, the 'sub-citizen', who occupies a subordinate caste in relation to more powerful social actors. Neoliberalism does not offer an ideal collective future that benefits everyone, rather, it delineates relevant and irrelevant populations, promoting what is good for the economic elite while casting sub-citizens aside (Fletcher, 2015; Ross & Vinson, 2013). In such a context, the 'ideology of neutrality' that constrains deviations from majoritarian norms and promotes supposed 'neutral schools', teachers and curriculum, dominates theory and practice (Ross & Vinson, 2013).

This goal of 'neutrality' within educational institutions is well established in the teaching of social sciences in schools (Ross, 2017; Ross & Vinson, 2013). This ideology is in line with constraining understandings of democracy that limit civic participation and regard controversial topics in social sciences as 'dangerous' territory. We, in contrast, agree with Freire (1970), that education is a political act in itself, and that attempting to maintain political neutrality in classrooms and schools only serves to maintain social inequalities. By not equipping students to navigate through issues of social justice, 'politically neutral schools' and institutions fail to educate active learners who participate in the potential project of citizenship;

rather they encourage passive citizenship. In such a context, decline in civic/political engagement among youths becomes an issue of special concern (Parker, 2014).

Further, the neoliberal education reforms of the past decades posit politically neutral schools as 'objective', claiming neutrality is a prerequisite for maintaining a safe and professional environment for students and staff. We would agree with Ross and Vinson (Ross, 2017; Ross & Vinson, 2013), however, who claim that these neoliberal education reform assumptions and agendas have actually worsened issues of inequality and segregation within society and schooling. We do not agree with the neoliberal precept that views education as a commodity and strives to promote financial gain as the ultimate priority, increasing competition and the maximisation of market-driven profits. Such reforms have involved opening public education to private investments, human capital education policies, and an increase in standardised curriculum and testing. In such contexts, education is a commodity and low performing public schools are closed or replaced with 'publicly funded, but privately run' schools (Ross & Vinson, 2013). The neoliberal principles have, thus, aimed to use public wealth to maximise private rather than for public gain.

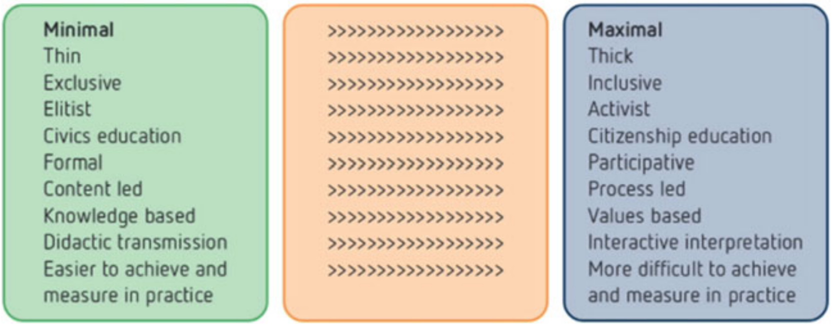
For teachers, neoliberal reforms have taken the form of human capital policies for teachers which translate into larger classes, reduced tenure positions and seniority rights, replacing senior teachers with less qualified teachers, an increase in working hours while reducing fringe benefits, and replacing local public leaders with private management (Ross & Vinson, 2013). Finally, standardised curriculum and high stakes testing, based on this neoliberal approach to schooling, can serve to reduce teaching, often, to test preparation and limit the teacher's freedom with teaching content. This is a control strategy of what is taught and learnt in classes. As Dewey (1916) rightfully noted, education can be used as a means for social control, as in the examples above. But as he also noted, it can be enriching, nourishing, and it can enhance our societies, and how we view ourselves within them.

2.3 Citizenship Education to Mandate Responsibilities and Define Rights Through Engagement

Most of us are familiar with the idea, within civics and citizenship education, that as citizens, we have a given set of 'rights and responsibilities' as a consequence of our birthright or as naturalised to a nation state. But this is often cast in a 'you need to behave in this way' and 'obey these sets of laws' to be a good citizen, or really, to be a citizen at all. Despite this traditional, and, we would argue, slightly conservative understanding of citizenship, this is important; for we are not just asked to obey certain rules and guidelines, and fulfil obligations, but we are also conferred a certain set of rights as dutiful citizens (or even if we're not consistently dutiful). However, fulfilling one's 'responsibilities' and enjoying one's 'rights' are just part of the picture, from this perspective on citizenship. There are two classic discussions that begin with this traditional 'rights/responsibilities' view of citizenship and extend it in humanistic and engaging ways: the work of McLaughlin (1992) and Westheimer and Kahne (2004a, 2004b).

McLaughlin posits that citizenship education sits on a continuum from ‘minimal’ to ‘maximal’ (1992), as exemplified in his figure just below. From the *minimal* vantage point on this continuum, citizenship education is understood and enacted in a way that focuses on the teacher, a specific set of facts and knowledge, and tends towards the elitist and exclusive. On the other hand, from the *maximal* vantage point, citizenship education is understood and enacted in a way that focuses on students and communities, a more interpretive and collective set of facts and knowledge, tends towards the participatory, and is activist in orientation. In essence, the minimal citizenship is more aligned with neolibral educational imperatives (Fletcher, 2015; Ross & Vinson, 2013), while maximal is more aligned with critical ones (Cary & Pruyn, 2021a, b; Darder, 1991; Freire, 1970; Heggart, 2021). Additionally, we see connections between McLaughlin’s continuum of citizenship teaching as similar continuum relating to the teaching of democracy (Carr, Zyngier & Pruyn, 2012), as they both reference ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ iterations (Fig. 1).

A decade and a half later, Westheimer and Kahne (2004a, 2004b) articulated their three ‘types of citizens’ based on research in North American classrooms. As is elaborated in their table, just below, these include, first, the ‘personally responsible’ citizen, who contributes to their society in a responsible way as an individual. They might, for example, donate a can of food to a local food drive. Next is the ‘participatory’ citizen who is more socially and politically engaged in their society, and might, let’s say, *organise* that same food drive to which the personally responsible citizen is contributing. Finally, there is the ‘justice-oriented’ citizen. They ask, ‘Why is this food drive necessary? What is the cause of this hunger?’ Their research, based on observing and studying actual civics and citizenship units of study across multiple contexts, identified a focus on these three types of citizenships (and citizens) in schools and classrooms where teachers focused on this discipline (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a) (Table 1).



Minimal		**Maximal**
Thin	>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	Thick
Exclusive	>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	Inclusive
Elitist	>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	Activist
Civics education	>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	Citizenship education
Formal	>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	Participative
Content led	>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	Process led
Knowledge based	>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	Values based
Didactic transmission	>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	Interactive interpretation
Easier to achieve and measure in practice	>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	More difficult to achieve and measure in practice

Fig. 1 Citizenship education continuum (*Source* McLaughlin [1992] citizenship education continuum)

Table 1 Kinds of citizens

Personally Responsible Citizen	Participatory Citizen	Justice Oriented Citizen
Acts responsibly in his/her community Works and pays taxes Obeys laws Recycles, gives blood Volunteers to lend a hand in times of crisis	Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts Organizes community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up environment Knows how government agencies work Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks	Critically assesses social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice Knows about democratic social movements and how to effect systemic change
Sample Action		
Contributes food to a food drive	Helps to organize a food drive	Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes
Core Assumptions		
To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and lawabiding members of the community	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question, debate, and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time

We feel the work of these researchers and theorists, collectively, helps those teaching citizenship education to both embrace the notion of having students study our ‘rights’ and ‘responsibilities’ but also to move beyond these to understand more deeply what it means to be a member of a society and to engage with it. However, we also believe that we as educators concerned with social justice and democracy might go further. We feel that, for example, it is not enough to have students ask hard questions about why our societies are the way they are for different groupings of citizens. We need to encourage them to begin to plan and take concrete actions for change based on these analyses and to support teachers motivated to take these kinds of pedagogical actions. This is the focus of the following section (and we will also return to it in the ‘discussion’ at the end of this piece).

2.4 Critical Citizenship Education as a Conduit for Liberation and Social Justice

More critical approaches view citizenship as practice and citizenship education as forming through action. Cary and Pruyn (2021b), for example, propose the concept of ‘lived citizenship’, largely enacted through active membership in communities. Through this lens, rather than being passive members of society, one can define their citizenship by enacting it; thus building on and extending the types of citizenships/citizens elaborated by McLaughlin (1992) and Westheimer and Kahne (2004a). Lawy and Biesta (2006), for example, point out that citizenship as achievement presents a narrow conceptualization of what citizenship entails; they support citizenship as practice, highlighting that ‘young people learn to be citizens as a consequence of their participation in the actual practice that make up their lives’ (p. 45). Viewing citizenship as enactment, these theorists take the stance that citizenship education should not be seen as a one-dimensional intake of knowledge, but rather, it should be grounded in the day-to-day practices of young people, shaped through their experiences and relationships.

Taking this bridging notions even further—from ‘engagement’ to ‘criticality’—citizenship is also seen as a potential conduit for liberation and social justice (Fischman & Hass, 2021; Freire, 1970; Heggart, 2020; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, 2004b). We believe it is a true thing that citizenship is a ‘political production’ that supports some and oppresses others, such that the discriminated against cannot enjoy the ‘full exercise of citizenship as a peaceful and recognized right’ (Freire, 1998, p. 90); yet it is a right to be achieved in order for democracy to grow. Freire posits that citizenship is not obtained by chance, it is fought for and earned in political and cultural struggle. And it implies freedom. He notes (1998), that citizenship.

> ...is a construction that, never finished, demands we fight for it. It demands commitment, political clarity, coherence, and decision. For this reason, a democratic education cannot be realized apart from an education of and for citizenship. (p. 90)

We take these critical understanding as a given, and they help to guide our pedagogical, philosophical, and empirical work as educators and researchers. We drew on this criticality, as well as our understandings and critiques of both the ‘neoliberal’ and the more connected and engaged ‘rights/responsibilities’ approaches to citizenship and citizenship education, as we sought to understand the data generated from interviewing our 21 teacher, teacher educator, and educational researcher participants. Those findings that resulted from those analyses are shared in the next section. Following that, we will return to our ‘theoretical underpinnings’ as we discuss what these findings might imply for the field.

3 Findings

3.1 Understanding Citizenship's Multiplicitous Nature

Our participants understood and made sense of the concept of citizenship in various ways. For them, it was an amorphous concept, yet it existed across many contexts. It involved membership and fostered a sense of inclusion, but it also excluded. It was defined and made real through social messaging and identity exploration, but also through its practice as a form of social engagement. For our participants, citizenship was all of these things.

Most held that citizenship was an amorphous concept that could be defined in multiple ways. Carl (pseudonyms used throughout), a teacher educator, noted this when he commented:

> The notion of citizenship gives you a heightened sense of vagueness or malleability. The idea of being a 'citizen' is not set in stone, it's not predetermined, not timeless.

Frida, a secondary teacher and graduate student, extended what Carl said. She noted:

> I work with students in secondary school, and they have *multiple* citizenships. And so, the idea of 'citizenship' to them is sort of amorphous. It's quite moving, really. And they would define citizenship in terms of maybe where they are at the moment. So, for myself, I have citizenship in multiple countries. But it goes beyond that.

Ned, a former community activist and now academic, conceptually extended Carl and Frida's definitions of citizenship as a vague and multiplicitous concept and pushed it into the domain of the *affective* that might aid us in our enactments of citizenship. Ned commented:

> Across time, I've come to understand citizenship as an orchestration of formal institutions and practices, acts—and feelings—predominantly. So, the literature talks about citizenship in different ways, and we've moved beyond some of those formal understandings, to think about the things we do *as* 'citizenship', how we *feel* citizenship, which are the affective dimensions, you know, which encompass issues like identity and belonging. And then practices of citizenship, which are related to acts, they can be things that we do to enact citizenship, things that are required of us, living in democracies. But they actually can vary from voting to protest, you know?

Susan, a school teacher and graduate student, acknowledged the multiple levels of understanding embedded in the concept of citizenship as she connected it to *self-perception.* She commented:

> I sort of think of it like the layers of an onion, you know? Like, we talk about that with a lot of different subjects where you have this peripheral, environmental kind of thing on the outside. And as you gradually peel away the layers of the onion, you get more and more, you know, specific, right? So generally, we could say we're all citizens of our own countries. But then as you go further and further down into it there are other layers that sort of build who you are *as a citizen* and how you *perceive* yourself.

Most participants in our research forwarded these same interpretations and understandings of citizenship. They felt that it's a vague and ill-defined concept, multiplicitous, largely grounded in feelings and self-perceptions, and that these latter might lead us to enact our own conceptualisations of citizenship in our own contexts. Despite these nuanced understandings, many participants simultaneously had a hard time distinguishing citizenship from simple group membership, as Emma, a teacher and graduate student, noted:

> So, I've been thinking about this. There're a lot of groups that I'm a member of. But I wouldn't consider myself a citizen of them. So, in my mind, I'm trying to differentiate between being a citizen versus just a member of a community.

Notwithstanding the challenge participants had in distinguishing between citizenship and membership, a majority of them did see strong connections between citizenship, power, and privilege. Susan elaborated:

> When we're talking about social class, those that are economically privileged, they don't have to worry about carrying passports. Or they can carry multiple passports. They don't have to worry about these things because their wealth protects them. As opposed to, alternately, my migrant students who have no citizenship in this country. So, I think of citizenship as a way to create *boundaries* and *exploitation.* It makes me really sad. I think of citizenship too, as a kind false consciousness. It limits us. You know, we pledge allegiance to things, and how does that work itself out?

Frank, an academic and former school teacher, added:

> I'm not gonna pretend that I don't understand the role of power and privilege. I mean listen, everywhere I've gone, from the US to Australia to Malaysia, and lots of other places internationally. All the places I've been, I carry my privilege with me as a white man.

Participants also pointed out that while our identities as citizens can bring us a sense of belonging and inclusion, they can also act to exclude. Grandy, a community activist, teacher, and researcher, noted:

> I associate citizenship with a sense of belonging. And I almost feel like it's in my *mind*, it's in my *subconscious.* You know, you want to be a citizen of one place. But I feel like you can't be a citizen of one place. I feel myself as a citizen of many places. I identified in my high school years as African American. And then I switched back to identifying as Jamaican. I've kind of shifted to being both Black and of the diaspora. So, citizenship for me is about *belonging*, but not belonging to one thing, belonging to multiple places, and connected to multiple people.

But Frida problematised the notion of belonging:

> For me, I think that citizenship can be a form of exclusion for me. Citizenships are meant to exclude people politically, right?

This comment from Frank added to this understanding:

> I have this really complicated understanding, now, around citizenship. And it has sort of morphed from this idea of *kinship* and *togetherness* into something else. People fight so hard to keep others out, and to keep others in. I don't understand why that is.

And for many participants, they only became aware of citizenship when imposed identities of otherness placed them in liminal spaces, as Qui, a teacher and academic noted:

> Before I came to this country, I never really thought about the concept of citizenship. I didn't really see myself as a Chinese. Just a student, a girl from the countryside. So, I came here [to the US] and realised that people know me primarily as a girl from China. For me there's a gap. There's ourselves as individuals, there's a nation, but nothing in the middle. We don't have any way to make our voices heard.

However, a very powerful thread of understanding around citizenship resonated for almost all of our participants. For them, citizenship necessitated being engaged and active in communities and in social and political contexts. Susan saw this as connected this to the traditional 'rights and responsibilities' notion of citizenship:

> Are you truly a citizen if you don't uphold your 'citizen responsibilities'? You know, on one level, citizenship is a piece of paper. So, if you have someone who's a citizen on paper, but they're not taking any responsibilities tied to being a citizen, then what is a citizen?

Ernesto's point build on this conceptualisation:

> Citizenship is a loaded term, first of all. Because on the one hand, it requires action, requires responsibility, understanding political systems, all those kinds of things. So, most people see that citizenship is, you know, as having your own place to live, voting once or twice a year, but most people don't see it as an everyday responsibility. Which it is. Or should be.

And Frank gave an example of what this looked like for him:

> Citizenship is doing businesses in my hometown, supporting my kids' school, doing science stuff (with them and as a science educator). Citizenship is supporting the community. It's helping out my neighbours. I mowed my neighbour's lawn after her husband died, for two years. You know, those are the things you do to be a citizen and I'm not—I think there's only one type—I think there's only good citizens.

But he also saw these citizenship obligations as connected to an imperative for social justice (which we will address more below). Frank said:

> For me, citizenship is standing up to every racist that I see, standing up for things that I know are right, and teaching my kids to stand up for kids who are being bullied.

Across these various, overlapping, contradictory, and interwoven definitions of citizenship, two central points came through very clearly from our participants. First, citizenship education as a means of exploring and promoting critical consciousness (Darder, 1991; Freire, 1970) and social engagement and activism (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, 2004b) was not only possible, but necessary. And second, citizenship education in schools as they experienced it was almost non-existent, and where it was present, certainly was not working as a conduit for social justice and change.

4 Experiencing Citizenship Education

For our participants, discussions of citizenship in schools—or even formal citizenship education—were a rarity, for themselves as students or now for their children. When it was present, it mostly had to do with memorising decontextualised facts. Frank noted:

> This is a really interesting time to be thinking about citizenship in schools. It's probably something we don't do enough of. I know very rarely do my kids come home telling me what it means to be a citizen. But they certainly come home talking a lot about, you know, historical facts.

Not infrequently, when learning around citizenship does occur, it can be separate from formal 'citizenship education'. Carl shared:

> When I was in school, in terms of learning about citizenship—as a punk white boy—I took this basic intro to composition class. But the teacher was Native American and had us read stuff about the American Indian Movement and the occupation of Alcatraz in the sixties. She had us read that, and I was like, 'Oh, hell yeah!'

So, while he found a connection to studies of identity, politics, and citizenship as a high school student, he found these opportunities lacking, but very needed, for his own children now. Carl elaborated:

> With my kids (who are mixed race) in school, citizenship is about being Black in a white environment. There are white kids their age who read them as Black and 'talk Black' to them (their version of that). So then, my kids come and talk in this accent, as white people trying to sound Black. It's humorous, but there are real power differentials at work. And for my kids, it's important for them to understand how to make tactical decisions within these structures of power, to understand the situations they're in. Especially now. We have to talk about race constantly because of what they have to deal with. But these conversations are not happening in school. They have to understand what they're going into and how people are going to be responding to them based on who they think they are because of what they're seeing in front of them.

While rarely visible in school contexts for our participants—and when it was, usually reduced to an exercise in memorising discrete and unconnected facts—citizenship education (whether within or outside of schools) was seen as important in terms of helping young people understand their realities and manoeuvre through social and political contexts. But connecting studies of citizenship to deeper understandings of power, oppression, and potential liberation—and how that connected to one's obligations as an active citizen—was just as important.

5 Linking Citizenship, Power, and Liberation

Our participants understood citizenship to be intimately interwoven with power, oppression and, potentially, liberation. This seemed clear as they elaborated their understandings of citizenship and then the fact that they saw useful citizenship discussions and education largely lacking within schools. But in terms of its potential, almost all of our participants believed that citizenship education could and should be a conduit for understanding structures of power and oppression and building orientations towards action for the promotion of social justice.

Carl encourages his children to see oppression as situated with a socially constructed context of power. He said:

> I want my kids to understand, in terms of citizenship and identity, that the racist kids at their school didn't invent racism. It wasn't even necessarily their choice. They're just reproducing how they've been socialised.

And Frank seemed to understand the current realities of authoritarian populism against a backdrop of slow progressive progress and the potential for inclusive citizenship. He noted:

> In my mind there's always going to be thirty percent of people in this country that are just racist. So, I think, in terms of trying to create inclusive citizenship, you know, we're seeing it happen, I think, a little bit at a time, here and there. What I think is happening in the country now are the last spasms of white, conservative men who are losing their grip.

Ernesto held that we need to connect our understandings of power and politics to concrete commitments to action, circling back to how he, and most of our other participants, defined and understood citizenship in the first place: as something that required enactment. He shared:

> To take citizenship to its limits, you need to show that you have a voice, that you understand the responsibility of it. Citizenship is not something that is given to you. You need to do something with it, you need to use and earn it, you know? But being involved in actionable social justice issues can be a very uncomfortable feeling. But you have to learn to feel comfortable with it. Because once you understand this obligation, you're gonna have to do it for the rest of your life. Once you enter into that consciousness, you can't just walk out.

He made the connections between citizenship, identity, and solidarity—and how these might further a critical consciousness orientation in the pursuit of social justice—when he shared the following story of himself as a young man returning from war. Ernesto shared:

> As a Mexican American man, when I came home from Vietnam, I remember standing there on the sideline of protests and wondering, 'Why are these guys marching?' They have everything, you know, and they just need to be appreciative of what we all have. Then I spoke to this really nice young guy, a couple of years younger than me, and he said, 'Well, tell me about yourself'. I said, 'I'm from a rural community up the road, and I just got out of the army'. And he said, 'You went to fight for this country. And does this country do anything for you?' With this line of questioning, he helped me to reach another level of understanding, of consciousness, if you will, that I didn't have before, you know? So, I began to read up on it, I began to take courses in Chicano studies, and civil rights, understanding civil rights, and the major violations of groups of people: African Americans, Native Americans, women, etc. It was horrible, you know, and I started studying all this, and it got me into a whole different place. Yeah, you realise that later, and that it was a big lie, you know, that work (the war, and other things) was a big lie to distract from the *real* problems the country was facing at the time, the civil rights movement, the 'uprisings' as they called them. That war was a

> distraction. And thinking about it in that way was uncomfortable, even though it helped me develop my critical consciousness. But it was like Paulo Freire used to say, 'You have to feel comfortable with discomfort'.

Grandy saw the potential of pedagogical citizenship conversations as conduits for building critical consciousness for acts of solidarity through social justice action:

> When I talk to young women of colour, I try to teach a strategic way for them to push back against oppression. We talk about who they are and about their community. There was one young woman in particular who identified as being Vincentian (from the Caribbean Island of St Vincent). Even though she was born in the US—she's a second-generation immigrant—she says, 'I'm Vincy'. 'That's where I'm from, that's my identity'. Then later, after working in this group with her and other young women of colour, she said, 'I'm African American'. When I asked her, how is it that you're African American? And she said, 'Well, I identify as African American because I identified as a part of the struggle'. So that's where the solidarity comes in. And these young women are even talking about their friends from, like, El Salvador, or you know, all these different places—other young women of colour—who they're coming together to push back against oppression. They were creating communities. And in terms of citizenship, when they couldn't find a community that they fit into, they created new communities.

What we learned from our participants was that by understanding citizenship through the lenses of power, oppression, and liberation—and by developing our understandings of ourselves as living in socially constructed contexts we can influence individually and collectively—citizenship education had the potential to aid in struggles for social justice.

6 Discussions and Conclusions

6.1 Towards a Transformative Citizenship for Teachers and Students

In our theoretical underpinnings section above, we elaborated three broad goals of citizenship education as we saw them. They were:

1. To maintain a social order predicated on inequity
2. To mandate responsibilities, define rights, and encourage self-definition
3. To be a conduit for liberation and social justice

We discussed how leading theorists and researchers understood and explained these goals. In this section, we will posit and elaborate six *conceptual categories* of citizenship and discuss the themes of our three central findings in relation to them, especially as they connect to teachers, students, and efforts at promoting social justice.

Based on our review of the citizenship literature, we suggest that different approaches to and understandings of citizenship sit across six conceptual categories. These are: 'authoritarian citizenship', 'responsible citizenship', 'rightful citizenship', 'questioning citizenship', 'transformative citizenship', and 'disconnected citizenship'.

'Authoritarian citizenship', we posit, seeks to maintain oppressive relationships of power and economic, social, or political inequalities. From this perspective, citizens serve the state and the powerful, there are hierarchies of difference (based on ethnicity, social class, sexual identity, gender identity, etc.), some citizens are seen as 'less' than others, and notions of national 'exceptionalism' are present. The work of Fischman and Hass (2012), Fletcher (2015), Freire (1970), and Ross and Vinson (2013) speaks to this category and its enactment.

We see the goal of 'responsible citizenship' as trying to elaborate what our responsibilities are to the polity and society as mandated or suggested by the state (or by unwritten social codes). Under this category, we are obliged to pay our taxes, obey laws, follow rules, and are encouraged (or obligated, as we are in Australia) to vote regularly for representative governmental leaders. This category goes hand in hand, traditionally, with its corollary, 'rightful citizenship', which confers upon citizens certain rights and protections within society. If you're a responsible citizen (or even if you're not), you have earned *rights*, or have them as your birthright. These typically include the right to free speech, assembly, of and from religion, redress of grievance, the right to petition the government, etc. The work of Heggart (2020, 2021), McLaughlin (1992), Peterson and Tudball (2017), and Westheimer and Kahne (2004a) help us to give meaning to this category.

The category of 'questioning citizenship', we suggest, would have us seek to more deeply understand how our societies are bound up in systems of power and exploitation; such that some citizens experience oppression, while others experience privilege, some are able to experience their rights fulsomely, while others are not. The work of Heggart (2020), McLaughlin (1992), Peterson and Tudball (2017), and Westheimer and Kahne (2004a) are also drawn upon as we seek to understand categories. An illustrative example here is provided by the work of Westheimer and Kahne (2004a). They posit that a 'personally responsible' citizen donates a can to the food drive, a 'participatory citizen' organises the food drive, and a 'justice-oriented' citizen asks why people are hungry. For us, at the heart of 'questioning citizenship' are analytical questions such as the following. How and why do inequities and inequalities exist? Who is advantaged and who is exploited in the creation and maintenance of these inequitable power relationships? And while we see the intellectual probing of these issues as central, it is only the first step in seeking to create more equity and social justice, from our perspective.

It is through 'transformative citizenship' that we would begin to take action based on analyses undertaken through 'questioning citizenship'. From our perspective, this is intimately connected with the development of critical consciousness and critical praxis (Freire, 1970). It would have us, individually, collectively, and pedagogically, encourage ourselves and our students to begin to see ourselves as 'subjects' who can act upon the world in order to change it, instead of simply as 'objects' that are acted upon by others (Freire, 1970). Further, this category of citizenship would have us begin by questioning and analysing our 'lived citizenship' realities (Cary & Pruyn, 2021b), certainly, but would then beg *action*. It would have us experiment and attempt to make changes towards more equity, reflect on our attempts, and then to repeat our efforts. 'Transformative citizenship' involves an ongoing critical praxis of action-taking at its core, thus extending Westheimer and Kahne's (2004a) 'justice-oriented' analytical and questioning form of citizenship into the realm of a citizenship that seeks to transform society. An example of this would be the Global Climate Strike youth movement built around the work of Greta Thunberg and other young people around the world (Global Climate Strike, 2021).

However, we posit another category of citizenship, 'disconnected citizenship'. If we are unsuccessful as citizenship theorists, researchers, and pedagogues, of facilitating positive understandings and enactments of citizenship—be they 'responsible', 'rightful', 'questioning', 'transformational', or an amalgam of these—we run the risk that people might feel disconnected, cynical, or exhausted (and busy surviving) within the societies and polities where they live, that they could, indeed, continue to be the 'objects' upon which others act (Freire, 1970). To paraphrase UK spoken word poet Suli Breaks (2012), if you don't work towards your own destiny and future, someone else will hire you to construct theirs. And, of course, during times of ongoing crisis, such as the COVID pandemic or moves away from democracy and towards oppressive authoritarianism, or even the challenges of trying to economically survive in everyday life, potential paralysis brought on by pessimism is always a possibility; and, thus, a growing sense of 'disconnected citizenship'.

In returning to our findings, and beginning to build connections to our theorisation of these six conceptual categories of citizenship, we offer the following. Our participants believe that citizenship is 'vague', 'mailable', 'not set in stone' (Carl),and 'amorphous' (Frida). Further, citizenship, they believe, is a layered and complex combination of 'practices', 'acts', 'feelings' (Ned), and self-perceptions (Susan), a combination that can create limiting 'boundaries', facilitate 'exploitation' (Susan), and create inequitable 'privilege' (Frank). But, according to our participants, it is also within citizenship that we can find 'belonging' and 'solidarity' across differences (Grandy) as well as feelings of 'kinship' and 'togetherness' (Frank).

And while our participants saw very little evidence of citizenship education being either explicitly taught, or employed in these kinds of ways in schools, they did see it as a potential springboard for liberatory understanding and action; both pedagogically and socially. We are witnessing, they note, examples of 'inclusive citizenship…a little at a time, here and there' (Frank). But along with this also comes 'an everyday responsibility' associated with citizenship (Ernesto), and an obligation to be lived out (Frank). We need to 'do something' with our citizenship, to 'use it and earn it' while coming to 'feel comfortable' with the discomfort and tension of its enactment (Ernesto). This could be an effective—and even joyous and celebratory—way of pushing back against oppressive relations of power (Grandy) and successfully fighting for more equity and social justice.

These findings bolster our belief in allowing teachers to promote, and students to engage with, a combination of 'responsible', 'rightful', 'questioning', and 'transformative' ways of understanding and living citizenship in classrooms, schools, and communities. We feel this lived interplay of citizenships is the best way to push back against forms of 'authoritarian' citizenship and to mitigate the potentially debilitating forms of 'disconnected' citizenship. This holds true, we posit, especially if we are able to foster and attempt a 'critical praxis' of acting to change vertical, oppressive, and coercive forms of power into shared, horizontal ones in the pursuit of increased equity and social justice. But this also means pushing back against neoliberal views of teachers and teaching that value productivity and efficiency over quality and depth, test scores over engagement, international rankings over happiness scales, teacher compliance over teacher activism, and student attendance over engagement in social movements.

Our thinking around the need for, and potential of, the critical and engaged forms of citizenship education we have been advocating for based on our research aligns well with what the other authors of this volume have advocated. As researchers, theorists, and teachers of citizenship education, we believe that the changes we advocate for are not possible without collectively working to understand and support classroom teachers, especially during these times. The work in this volume would have us take seriously understanding the big picture but acting in the everyday; teaching and working for democracy; respecting each other across our similarities and differences as intellectual workers; understanding the importance of personal narrative, identity, memory, and agency; working in union and solidarity; and supporting and mentoring the novices amongst us. We add to this a call to consider more empowering ways of understanding and enacting citizenship, in our classrooms and beyond.

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Conclusion

Keith Heggart and Steven Kolber

Abstract This chapter brings together the main themes discussed in the rest of the book. Principally, it seeks to examine how having a diversity of voices might contribute to both more informed discussions about the status and role of teachers, but, perhaps even more importantly, how empowered teachers are central to the development of active and informed citizens, and thus the functioning of democracy as a whole.

1 A Multitude of Voices

We are sure readers have noticed that this is not your traditional academic book. While it has a collection of chapters all grouped around the central themes of empowering teachers and democratising schooling within an Australian setting, these chapters come from a field broader than academia—and deliberately so. When we hosted the 'Resisting Teacher Bashing' Teach Meet in 2019, we were overwhelmed both by the number of participants that wanted to speak about the topic—but also the diversity of those participants. We had former politicians, television personalities, and, as you might expect, academics. But the group that was the largest in number was *teachers*—from diverse sectors, systems and locations—and with varying levels of experience. At the Teach Meet, they spoke about many different topics, including teacher workload, work intensification, standardised testing, different approaches to pedagogy and the unhelpful influence of the media. However, what united all of these teachers was the anger they felt because their voices—and the voices of their colleagues—were not being included in discussions about education. Teachers spoke about their frustration that, whenever there was a discussion in the media about standardised testing, or about gender education in schools, or any of a dozen other

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topics, often the people that were interviewed or appeared on television were not teachers—or even former teachers!

When the Teach Meet evolved into this book, the exclusion of teachers from public discussions about education was central to our decisions about how best to structure the book. We wanted to make sure that this wasn't just another academic text. Equally, we wanted to make sure that it was not just a collection of teachers writing about their personal passions in relation to education (although we are not suggesting either of these two options is without value). Books like this have been done before, and we are sure they will be done again. What was crucial to us was bringing together these different voices to engage in a productive discussion. Too often, the stakeholders in discussions about the state of education talk past each other. We wanted to find a way to metaphorically get everyone around the same table—and the result is the book that you've read.

Astute readers will have noticed that there is a variability in tone and style throughout the book. Some chapters are detailed academic considerations of specific issues, backed by empirical research, and well contextualised within the extant literature. Other chapters are much more personal; they draw not from any formal research, but from the rich lived experience of teachers and former teachers, and are critical reflections upon their experiences within our educational systems. These are no less valuable than their more academic counterparts: rather, we think that they provide the counterpart to the more academic chapters—they are the view from the other side of the desk, as it were. Taken together, this book provides a detailed and comprehensive discussion of the challenges and opportunities facing educators in schools in the twenty-first century. It is this richness and diversity of voices and experiences that makes *Empowering Teachers and Democratising Schools: Perspectives from Australia* a powerful testament to the experience of school and schooling.

2 Democratising Schooling

At first glance, the two themes of this book—empowering teaching and democratising schooling—might appear to be separate, but still important issues. It is our hope that the chapters in this volume have communicated to you that they are actually intrinsically linked. It is hard to disagree with the notion of education as a public good. The links between education and better community outcomes are well known. Equally, it is hard to disagree with the value of democracy as the foundation for our society. Of course, discussions about how democratic our society is are common and valuable, and these often segue into debates about how democratic schooling should be. It is the position of the editors of this book (and, we hasten to note, a position shared by the education ministers of Australia according to the Alice Springs-Mparntwe Declaration) that school has a vital role to play in the development of active, informed members of the community—that is, people who are able to contribute to the strengthening of our democracy. The question then relates to how democratic schooling should be, and what form that democracy might take.

There are no quick or easy answers to these questions; indeed, it is likely that any answers will be relevant only to specific contexts. Nevertheless, this book has identified some of the key ways that teachers are already working in their classrooms and schools to make it more democratic and to prepare and encourage democratic participation in their schools and beyond, in the wider community. Some of these strategies included the deployment of Socratic circles within the classroom in order to foster community critical thinking and discussion. Similar ideas were also expressed by Cameron Paterson and Meredith Gavrin in their discussion of the use of thinking routines and critical thinking within their classrooms. More explicit focus on the purpose and role of civics and citizenship education and the role of teachers in that education was proposed by Heggart, and Flowers and Bee identified the need for a vibrant further education sector as part of a broader focus on democratic participation and engagement.

3 Empowering Teachers

Whether described explicitly in the above chapters or not, the strategies for democratising schooling rely upon empowered teachers. This is where the second theme of the book is relevant. Democracies rely on active and informed citizens. That activism might take very different forms, but nevertheless, one important measure of the health of any democracy is the level of engagement of its citizens (and perhaps even non-citizens) in both the political and civil spheres. In addition, the scope of the citizen identity is also significant, just as female suffrage, and Indigenous Australians achieving the vote were crucial developments, inclusion of young people within the democratic process, perhaps without yet attaining the right to vote is crucial. This involvement does not need to be limited solely to national or local concerns; indeed, in this connected age, perhaps it is time to question the usefulness of these demarcations, and embrace the notion of active global citizenship, as suggested by organisations like The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Students achieving knowledge of, and engagement with, not only the Australian political system, and the nation more broadly, but also attaining an international outlook would be a noble and achievable goal.

This intersects with the notion of empowerment. Empowerment is a term that is used widely in educational literature, and rather than seeking any particular definition and how it might apply to the work and lives of teachers, we have instead embraced a multiplicity of examples within this book, with the hopes of providing examples rather than engaging in semantic arguments. Some of the examples described in this book include traditional measures, such as belonging to trade unions and professional associations, with either a local or a global scope. Other ideas, such as coaching, mentoring and nurturing the profession, take old ideas but breathe new life into them through the affordances of technology. There is also a recognition that part of being empowered is related to teachers being constantly learning about their craft and their role. More boldly there are calls to recognise teachers as democracy workers (Heggart, 2021), in the vein of Freire's cultural workers (Freire, et al., 2018). We note, too, that this notion of empowering teachers is also founded in a critical acknowledgement of the current failures of education and teachers and requires a commitment to learn from the mistakes of the past.

4 Where to from Here?

Despite what popular media might have us believe, education is not a silver bullet to solving all of society's ills. Nor are there any silver bullets within education itself; by its very nature, education is incredibly complex—best practice might work in some contexts, but not in others. This is not intended to sound defeatist - although it can be tempting to throw up one's hands, and declare education as 'unfixable'—or, as the authors in this book have documented—to focus on simple approaches that cater only to the needs of the few.

Adopting such an attitude is not what we intend to be an outcome of this book. It's certainly not what we've seen educators do, either. Education is an exercise in hope and optimism, and we encourage you to view this book in that light. What this book does is show that there are solutions possible to make education, as a whole, better and these solutions occur when teachers are empowered and respected as a profession, and have the professional autonomy and skill to do their important work sustaining and nurturing democracy in their classrooms, their schools and their wider communities. Importantly, this is not individual work—while there are incredible teachers out there, education as a whole is a collective endeavour—as is democracy—and it is more easily achieved when we work with each other.

We'd like to finish the book with a call to action. Having reaffirmed the important and principal role of education in society, we request that our readers—whether they are teachers, educators, academics or something else entirely—recognise their role to play in working towards the two goals of this book: empowering teachers and democratising schooling.

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