

## **Education and imagination: Strategies for social justice**

*The Herbison Lecture presented to the National Conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education, University of Canterbury, 4-7 December 2007*

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The Herbison Lectures honour the contribution to tertiary education made by Dame Jean Herbison. Jean Herbison held leading positions in the university, polytechnic and college of education sector and was the first woman to hold the post of Chancellor at a New Zealand university, the University of Canterbury. Following her death in May of this year an obituary described Jean Herbison as someone “who could see beyond traditional horizons” and whose work had significantly enhanced teacher education in New Zealand (Crean, 2007, p. D21). In this Herbison lecture I consider some beliefs and practices that limit the horizons of many children and I suggest that we imagine alternatives.

The theme for this conference is ‘education in the Pacific’. Education in the Pacific would seem to have some distinctive features. These may be most evident where the indigenous people of our region shape education in their particular cultural ways carried in the languages that are an essential part of belonging here. The Pacific may remind *tauiwi* that there are different ways of knowing and being in the world. Also, it is evident that some ways are dominant over others.

There is a tension here in that my own work exists within a New Zealand context. Its relevance for other Pacific people is for those communities to determine. Also, as Pakeha, I acknowledge a position grounded in issues of hegemony and power related to colonisation and the “institutionalised privilege” of whiteness (Hyttén & Adkins, 2001, p. 439). But, in the invitation to present this lecture, the organisers said that they wanted the conference to consider “our roles and responsibilities as educators in this part of the world”. It seems to me that acknowledging tensions and limitations in our work has to be part of that endeavour.

For Paulo Freire (1998) the roles and responsibilities of those “who dare to teach” require a commitment to freedom and to social justice. Without this, says Freire, “the teaching task becomes meaningless” (p.4). If education is not about freedom then it is about limitation and constraint. If education is not about social justice then it is about complicity with privilege and oppression. Freire says that the work of a teacher committed to freedom and justice requires the use of imagination so that through “curiosity and creativity” (p. 51) we might form new social realities. Also, such work requires a “love of others” and “intellectual rigour” (p.4).

For Freire, intellectual rigour is to be applied to the task of understanding the wider context of children’s lives, and to penetrating the “ideological fog” that causes oppressive practices to seem the normal order of things when in fact they serve the interests of the powerful (p.6). The analysis of context was central to the work of John Dewey who saw the interactions between culture, the economy, politics and schools as the basis for educational inquiry (Giarelli, 1996, p. vii). Michael Apple (1996) emphasises the importance of these linkages, urging us to recognise that all education policy and practice is “socially situated” (p.97).

In this paper I am going to support the idea that researchers and teachers should be committed to an ongoing analysis of the wider cultural and ideological contexts in

which education is embedded (Ballard, 2003). I shall also align with Freire in proposing that education policy and practice should work against oppression and for social justice. In this regard I use Nancy Fraser's (1997) ideas for a politics of redistribution and a politics of difference and identity.

This proposal implies high expectations for the power of education to change how we live together. Alison Jones (2004) has cautioned against belief in what she called "impossible redemptive fantasies" regarding what education may be expected to achieve (p.30). Michael Apple (2000) says that schools alone cannot overcome rightist politics and its inherent inequalities. Nevertheless, Apple (1996) notes that one of the most extensive and successful education projects of the last one hundred years has involved the political right making neo-liberal ideology the ordinary and accepted "common sense" throughout society, including education, politics, economics and the media (p.114). Education, then, within and beyond schooling, is capable of shaping thought and relationships.

In this lecture I suggest that we apply Freire's tools of imagination and intellectual rigour to create alternatives to the belief systems and social practices that shape four areas of present day life in our part of the Pacific. These are areas in which some hold positions of power and privilege and others experience harm and loss. In each case I suggest that education in social justice is a way to create more equitable schools and communities.

### **Violence by men against women**

The United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs states that violence against women in their home is "an urgent situation calling for an immediate response" and represents "a serious human rights violation" (United Nations, 1993, p. i). In this analysis the United Nations Centre sees violence by men against women as reflecting a wider context of "sexual and economic inequality in society" involving a pervasive male power in which "women are kept in a position of inferiority to men" (p. 10)

Janet Fanslow and Elizabeth Robinson (2004) undertook a population based cluster-sampling study of women aged 18-64 years in Auckland and North Waikato. From 2,855 face-to-face interviews they found that "[a]mong ever-partnered women, 33% in Auckland and 39% in Waikato had experienced at least one act of physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner" (p.1). The researchers note that their findings are consistent with data from other studies, including the New Zealand National Survey of Crime Victims. Fanslow and Robinson reported from their work that a wide range of mental and physical health problems were associated with such violence.

The Fanslow and Robinson research is published in *The New Zealand Medical Journal*. In a subsequent issue the journal published a comment on the study by Frank Sims who noted that in this research only women were interviewed with no data "from the husbands (sic) involved" (Sims, 2005, p.1). This, he claims, makes the data "highly suspect" for there is "no attempt to evaluate the verbal abuse and other forms of misbehaviour for which the wives may be responsible" (Sims, 2005, p. 1). Women, it would seem, must 'behave' or risk provoking male anger.

In January 2007 the (NZ) National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges reported that for the year to June 2006 "24,029 women and children fled to [the countries 50] safe houses, compared with 15,342 the previous year", and that there were

nine domestic related murders of women over the two month Christmas holiday period compared with six deaths the previous year (Chalmers, 2007, p. A3).

The chief executive of the Families Commission, Paul Curry, has stated that men are responsible for almost all family violence (Collins, 2006). This statement was made in support of White Ribbon Day, which on 25 November each year is the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Journalist Simon Collins (2006) reported researcher David Fergusson objecting to the claim about male violence made by Paul Curry. Fergusson said that the claim was inconsistent with evidence from longitudinal human development studies based in Christchurch and Dunedin. In these studies a similar percentage of women and men reported committing acts of aggression against a partner. On the basis of this data Fergusson accused the Families Commission of “ideologically driven” bias against men (Collins, 2006).

In her analysis of claims that women commit as much domestic violence as men, Janice Giles (2005) notes that most studies of this kind are based on data from a general population sample in which only small numbers of respondents will experience serious violence. Also, there are ambiguities in defining the equivalence of violent acts by men and women and such studies (including the Christchurch and Dunedin longitudinal studies) use an American questionnaire, the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) that is intended to measure conflict behaviours in relationships. This instrument is designed for use with ‘ordinary couples’ and in that context violence is typically minor and does not create fear for the recipient.

Giles (2005) notes that this is not to condone any form of violence by women or men. Rather, the research should differentiate general population data (using the CTS or not) from data accessed in contexts in which “intimate partner violence” creates significant physical or emotional harm and where the abused “lives in fear of the abuser”(Giles, 2006, p.1). In this latter context men are predominantly the violent partner.

While it is clearly important to interrogate all research data and interpretations in the area of domestic violence, we should also attend to data such as that reported by Women’s Refuge above and by Jo Fitzpatrick and Kristen Berger (2006) who note that “ more than 90% of applicants for protection orders under the Domestic Violence Act 1995 are women and most respondents are men” (p. 7). Further, the United Nations (1993) report on violence against women says that while men may experience violence from a female partner this rarely causes injury or a climate of fear and is not as common as violence by men against women partners.

The White Ribbon Campaign originated in Canada as a project of “men working to end men’s violence against women”. The goals include “educating men about the effects and consequences of violence against women” (The White Ribbon Campaign, 2007). The Campaign began as a response to the murder of 14 women students who were shot by a gunman who entered the School of Engineering at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal on 6 December 1989. The killer, Mark Lepine, separated women from men as he shot 26 people, 22 women and four men who intervened, before killing himself. He shouted that “You are all feminists. I hate feminists” and left behind a letter in which he named other women he intended to harm, all of who held positions of prominence in public life, the media, and other areas (Lakeman, 2002).

The Montreal Massacre, as it became known, is well documented. Following the killings the government, in collaboration with industry and professional organizations, set up the Canadian Committee on Women and Engineering. A report from the

Committee described the engineering profession as “at best unwelcoming to women and, at worst, contemptuous and hostile” (McKay, 1992, p.39). Women reported significant harassment both as students and as practicing engineers and one told a journalist that her boss had “laughed aloud when he heard the news of the Montreal Massacre” (McKay, 1992, p.42).

Lee Lakeman (2002) of the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter has recorded how the Canadian media described the Montreal killings as “incomprehensible” and as a “crime against humanity”, rarely addressing the fact that women were specifically the target of Lepine’s violence and ignoring “the killers own statement of his motives” (p. 5). Lakeman noted that in the year before the Montreal Massacre 97 Canadian women were killed by their male partners. She asserts the similarity between these killings and “Lepine’s murderous belief that men can use whatever force necessary to control women” (p. 3).

Violence against women, in all its forms - including that against lesbian women (Vincent & Ballard, 1998) and the exclusion of women from positions of influence, such as exclusion from the role of university Chancellor in New Zealand for 101 years - reflects deep cultural beliefs regarding male power over women. Such cultural beliefs and values are so much a part of everyday lives that they are experienced by many as normal thought and practice. In such a context, naming the problem and documenting its occurrence is, as the United Nations (1993) suggests, an important part of educating ourselves and our communities with the goal of eliminating the toleration and perpetuation of violence by men against women.

This is a major project. It is also a project that has links to other cultural values, attitudes and actions that form the basis for the ways in which we arrange our relationships with one another. One such aspect of relationships involves the extent to which we value fairness in the distribution of economic resources and the extent to which we justify and tolerate the injustices of poverty and inequality.

### **Poverty and inequality**

Susan St John and her colleagues in the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) say that official recognition of child poverty in New Zealand occurred for the first time in June 2002 in the Labour led governments *Agenda for Children* document (St John & Wakin, 2003, p. 5). It was known that from the early eighties the overall number of New Zealanders in poverty had risen dramatically to around 20% in 1993 (St John & Wakin, 2003). Using a poverty threshold of 60% equivalent net-of-housing costs median income, the Ministry of Social Development (2002, p. 10) now showed that 29% of New Zealand children lived in poverty with 66% of children of sole parents living in poverty (St John & Wakin, 2003, p.10). St John (2007, p. 2) notes that in 2004 one out of every five children “still exists at the margins of society” while the Ministry of Social Development (2004, p.6) records that in sole parent homes one in five reported they “could only sometimes afford to eat properly”.

In this context it should be no surprise that the United Nations International Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF) *Child poverty in rich countries* (2005) report records that out of 24 OECD countries New Zealand is one of a group of five that show “exceptionally high rates of child poverty” (p. 3). Waldegrave, King and Stuart (1999) note from their study that such poverty is experienced disproportionately among Maori and Pacific Island people (p. 47).

There are different ways of measuring poverty, but each has a theoretical and methodological justification and is open to critical appraisal (St John 2007; UNICEF, 2005). The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (2005) supports research on a range of poverty indicators but notes that “income and its distribution [is] the leading indicator of poverty...and the most telling single indicator of child well being” (p. 7). Such a measure is relative to a particular time and place so that it refers to fairness in the distribution of resources that are available in a society. Nevertheless, in all contexts poverty correlates with indicators of wellbeing in areas of health, nutrition, education and social participation (UNICEF, 2005). It is in these areas that poverty is recognised in research as having long-term implications accruing cumulative damage (Ministry of Social Development, 2004, p. 10; St John, 2007).

At the same time that high levels of child poverty have been created in New Zealand, data also shows the development of increasing inequality. Waldegrave(1998) cites a report of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in Britain that notes that “income inequality has been growing more rapidly in the UK than in other [OECD] countries except New Zealand” (Barclay, 1995, p. 14, cited in Waldegrave, 1998, p. 3). Statistics New Zealand (Cheung, 2007) calculates a Gini coefficient (a summary measure of inequality where the range is from 0 to 1, the closer to 1 the higher the inequality) for New Zealand of 0.693 (p. 8), which is consistent with international data indicating New Zealand as having one of the highest measures of inequality internationally (Conceicao & Galbraith, 2001, p. 155). Statistics New Zealand report that the top 10% of wealthy individuals own 51.8% of New Zealand’s total net worth while the bottom 50% of New Zealanders “owns a mere 5.2 per cent of total net worth...” (Cheung, 2007, p. 6)

In this context, data for the years 1982 to 1998, the period within which neo-liberal market policies were initiated in New Zealand, show that the mean household equivalent disposable income (adjusted for number of people and in 1998 dollars) for the lowest income group decile involved a loss of – 17% in that period (Mowbray, 2001, cited in Povey, 2002, p. 22). The top income group, decile 10, made a 36% gain in the same period. The Child Poverty Action Group (St John & Wakim, 2003) says that this shows a “large shift of income from low and middle income groups to the highest income group” (p. 11) with an actual decline in income at the lower levels.

From University of Texas Inequality Project data (Galbraith & Berner, 2001), James Galbraith (2001) says that the sharp rise in inequality in OECD countries after 1981, with New Zealand showing the largest increase, is not explained by advances in technology or by trade data. Galbraith claims that “[r]ather, the timing points mainly at the quasi-violent, financial regime change of the early 1980’s” (p. 3). This analysis is supported by Joseph Stiglitz, former Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank. Stiglitz (2003) documents increases in poverty and inequality in countries that have followed what he terms the “fundamentalist” free market economics promoted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (p.35; see also Klein, 2007).

Nevertheless, there are two contrasting explanations for why significant poverty exists in New Zealand. Both reflect a different imagining of human motivations and responsibilities.

The dominant imagination is evident in the neo-liberal discourse of welfare dependency (Fraser & Gordon, 1997) advanced by both the Labour and National parties. The neo-liberal belief is that humans are essentially individualistic and self- seeking. This means

that they cannot be trusted to work without the pervasive surveillance systems of managerialist performativity ( Ball, 1999), and that they may not work at all if they receive money in the form of welfare benefits on which they will become dependent. Overcoming ‘dependency’ was the justification given by a National government for the severe cuts it made to welfare benefits in the 1991 budget, with no research undertaken to assess the likely impact on families and children (Blaiklock, Kiro, Belgrave, Low, Davenport and Hassal, 2002, p. 8).

Subsequent Labour led governments have not restored benefit levels to pre 1991 levels and have continued to implement the “hard core” of neo-liberal policies (Roper, 2005, p. 234) that reflect a dependency model (Blaiklock et al, 2002). This model constructs the issue of welfare assistance not as a sharing of community resources in the interests of general wellbeing but as a problem of individual responsibility. It involves a particular concern directed at women who are single parents and assumes that child rearing itself is not productive work (Fraser & Gordon, 1997). An overall result of this belief system is that New Zealand does not have family benefits with a universal component, which are widely regarded as more effective than our targeted benefits, and the present (2007) Working for Families policy offers support only to those with work, leaving aside a vulnerable 250,000 children (St John, 2007).

The dominant explanation for poverty, then, locates the problem within the motivation and morality of the individual. An alternative explanation for the causes of poverty places emphasis on the wider socio-cultural context that is created as the result of chosen economic policies and practices.

As the data on poverty shows, the cost to New Zealand children of our chosen policies is considerable. The most recent *UNICEF Innocenti Report Card 7* ranks New Zealand as in the worst group for child income poverty at 19 out of 25 OECD countries (UNICEF, 2007, p. 42). New Zealand is also ranked last but one at the bottom of a table (24 out of 25 countries) on measures of the health and safety of children (p. 12), and New Zealand is the worst country in the OECD (24 out of 24) for deaths from accidents and injuries per 100,00 under 19 years of age (p. 16). These measures of health and safety are described by UNICEF as “indicators of the societies overall level of commitment to children” (UNICEF, 2007, p. 13).

UNICEF (2007) emphasises that comparisons across countries show that there is “no obvious relationship between levels of child well-being and GDP per capita” (p. 3) and that poor levels of child well-being “are not inevitable but [are] policy-susceptible” (p. 3; see also UNICEF, 2005, p.2). From the evidence of their studies the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre says that reducing child poverty requires state support. They note that because of such support there have been many countries where significant increases in unemployment in the 1980’s and 1990’s have not resulted in a significant rise in child poverty (UNICEF, 2000 report 1). Clearly New Zealand presents a different picture confirmed by Bradshaw and Finch (2002, cited in St John & Wakin, 2003, p. 23) who show that on measures of support for families New Zealand ranks toward the bottom at 17 out of 22 OECD countries

It seems evident that when we imagine that people are individual and self- seeking then we will extend support to them only reluctantly. If we wish to support children and families in ways that will enhance well being for all in our communities then we should work from an alternative position that imagines people as interdependent and that sees a

wider sharing of resources as the basis for a more democratic and just society (Fraser, 1997).

## **Racism**

Using census and health data the Ministry of Health and University of Otago (2006) report on what they term the 1981 to 1999 “decades of disparity”, when neo-liberal ideology was embedded into economic and social policies in New Zealand. The data show that Maori, who already had higher mortality rates, experienced a decline in life expectancy in comparison with non-Maori in this period.

The researchers report that the increase in socio-economic inequality for Maori in comparison with non-Maori in this period explains up to half the observed disparity in life expectancy between the two groups. Life style variables were seen as contributing less than 10% of the variance, negating a deficit model interpretation of the data. Inequality in life expectancy was evident within socio-economic groups, indicating that socio-economic position alone was not having the major health impact. Rather, the researchers say that “discrimination and socio-economic position are closely intertwined”, reflecting a “racialised social order” in which health inequalities are the result of inequalities of resources and power (Ministry of Health & University of Otago, 2006, p. 4).

Processes in a society that treat some people psychologically, socially and materially less well than others involve discrimination (Bhaba, 1994), and “where inequality and injustice disproportionately affect particular racial or ethnic groups”, such oppression may be identified as racism (Malin, 1999, p. 2). Colonisation involves related processes of power in which the ideas, meanings, language and ways of being of one group of people dominate those of another group (Smith, 1999).

In this context, a school system that consistently meets the needs and wishes of a dominant group, Pakeha, and consistently meets less well the needs and wishes of another group, Maori (Te Puni Kokiri, 1998, p.11; Human Rights Commission, 2006), should be analysed not from a deficit model of individual or group inadequacies but in terms of colonisation, oppression and racism. As part of such an analysis, the policies and practices that comprise New Zealand’s market model of schooling are implicated. The market policies of ‘Tomorrows Schools’ have created widening gaps between wealthy and poor state schools with increased ethnic and socio-economic class segregation (Harker, 2000; Waslander & Thrupp, 1995) and a decline in student performance in those schools that are market losers in this competitive system (Lauder, Hughes & Watson, 1999; Fiske & Ladd, 2000). Alan Hall (1999) considered the implications of a successful school that gains students at the expense of another school. The losing school declines in student numbers and resources and this may harm the educational chances of students who remain at that school. Hall suggests that such harm represents an ethical challenge for teachers and an issue of social justice.

Racism clearly represents a challenge to social justice. Statements expressing views associated with racist positions became evident in New Zealand following the Don Brash Orewa speech in 2004 (Hager, 2006, pp. 79-96; Taonui, 2006). As leader of the National party at the time, Brash (2004) described Maori claims over stolen land as the “Treaty grievance industry”; claimed that Maori gained special privileges from government funding based on ‘race’; and suggested that there were no “full blooded Maori”, a reference to the idea of blood purity that is a basis for eugenics and racism. In an editorial, the *Sydney Morning Herald* referred to these statements by Brash as

“playing the race card” and said that “[t]he liberation of racist...views from the constraints on which social cohesion relies is not easy to reverse” (Editorial, 2004, p. 12).

The Brash speech and its claims that Maori were a privileged group was popular and associated with a dramatic increase in voter support for the National Party. The response of the Labour led government suggested an alignment with such views by requiring that policy areas be made “needs” based and not associated specifically with data on Maori (or other ethnic group) deprivation, as, for example, in health, or with Maori rights under the Treaty (Hager, 2006, p.94).

A particular example of alignment with a populist discourse demanding the invisibility of Maori involved *The New Zealand curriculum: A draft for discussion* (Ministry of Education, 2006). The draft curriculum deleted all reference to the Treaty of Waitangi with the exception of one mention (in Social Sciences, Level 5). At an IHC(Inc) advocacy seminar in Wellington (23 November, 2006) I said that the deletion of the Treaty from the Draft Curriculum was shameful and a disgrace. In response, Labour Party Minister Ruth Dyson disagreed. She said that the Treaty was now so well understood that it was “infused” throughout the curriculum. The term ‘infused’ may be the latest code word for assimilation and suppression. In teacher education ‘infused’ signals an intention to delete serious study of the Treaty, inclusion and other social justice areas.

In its submission on the curriculum draft, the Human Rights Commission (2006) said that removal of the Treaty was in direct contrast with the (then) current curriculum where the Treaty was one of the principles on which the curriculum was explicitly based. The Commission stated that the Treaty should be in the guiding principles of the new curriculum and should be reflected throughout the learning areas. The final version of the curriculum reflects this position.

What it is that children are required to know through formal processes of education will always be a contested site as interest groups struggle to have their values and beliefs expressed through the curriculum. Success is an indicator of power, and for the moment power resides locally and internationally (Bob Lingard, 2001, p.28, for example, describes the OECD “proselytising” a neo-liberal managerialist model of education) with those who support and sustain a neo-liberal, New Right ideology. In the previous section of this paper I have claimed that political application of the theories and practices grounded in this belief system have consistently across countries and cultures benefited a few and disadvantaged many. The evidence also shows that benefits have accrued to white people over others (Allen, 2001).

In this context I do not think that we can make alternative ideologies work toward more socially just societies unless racism is addressed as a significant force that permeates society and underpins disadvantage and oppression (Malin, 1999). To challenge modern racism and its links to a populist nationalism (Rizvi, 1990) requires more than striving for understanding through inevitably limited accounts of minority cultures in bicultural and multicultural studies (Rizvi, 1992). While accounts of the Other have a role in exposing a reader to realities that are not their own, Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2000) suggests they may also create a “false sense” (p. 174) of understanding racism in those who are not oppressed, and could be a further instance of the appropriation of the lives of a minority in the interests and to the benefit of the majority. Christine Sleeter (1993) expresses a related concern that white discussion of difference and ethnicity may take

on a “‘tourist’ frame of thinking” (p. 14) and involve a depoliticised discourse that avoids issues of racism and white power. What is needed beyond exposure to stories of harmed individuals and groups, and beyond a concern for care and empathy that avoids engagement with politics and oppression, is a critical analysis of racism that, for white educators such as myself, must include scrutiny “of the power that accompanies our color” (Sleeter, 1993, p. 15).

In an account of an anti-racist professional development programme for American teachers, Sandra Lawrence and Beverly Tatum (1997) record one participant as saying that she had thought of racism as “an individual act of meanness ... [not] an intricate system of advantage, of which I was a part” (p. 336). An understanding of whiteness as “institutionalised privilege” (Hyttén & Adkins, 2001, p. 439) is essential if white researchers and teachers are to act against racism within schools and universities and if we are to understand that we cannot get “an individual dispensation that releases us from our racial position” and its rewards (Scheurich, 1993, p. 9). For those of us who are white, then into each classroom and each community setting that we enter, we take our white colour as a cultural, hegemonic signifier of normalcy, privilege, and power. This does not go away because we say that we oppose racism and that we work on anti-racist agendas. Rather, as Scheurich (1993) suggests, it requires recognition of our racialised status and the “need to make white racism a central, self-reflective topic of inquiry within the academy” (p. 9; see also *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Special Issue: Whiteness issues in teacher education, 2003, Vol.16, No. 1). This self-reflection should, I suggest, follow Freire’s call for intellectual rigour and avoid the often simplistic rituals of ‘reflective practice’, which John Smyth (1992) describes as lacking in a “politically informed” analysis (p. 292).

Donaldo Macedo and Lilia Bartolome (2001) analyse white racial superiority in western societies in terms of the oppression of subjugated minorities and the invisibility of this oppression to most white people. They urge that educators attend to the “hegemony of white power” (p.81) in universities and take seriously the ways in which racist views are promulgated as shared ‘common sense’ through the mass media. A similar form of normalised oppression that would seem mostly invisible to the oppressor is that experienced by disabled people.

## **Disability**

In a study of disability in New Zealand early childhood education a Chairperson of a Board of Trustees told researcher Kerry Purdue that “You don’t want too many of them coming here” (Purdue, Ballard & MacArthur, 2001, p. 42). If the study had been about gender or ethnicity I might expect readers of this statement to react with dismay or perhaps with anger against such explicit sexism or racism. Yet because disabled children are so often denied access to ordinary education settings (Munoz, 2007) I would not expect significant opposition to this teachers’ disablist views.

The segregation of disabled children has a long history in New Zealand. Elva Sonntag (1994) has described how, in the late 1940’s, Margaret and Hal Anyon worked with other parents throughout the country to petition parliament seeking an ordinary life for their disabled children. The parliamentary committee that considered their request decided that what was needed were institutions for such children, and this followed. Although the larger institutions have in recent years been closed, parents, disability advocates and their allies continue to struggle today against the exclusion of disabled children and young people from ordinary classrooms and schools (Higgins, MacArthur & Kelly, 2007).

The classification and categorisation of disabled people had its historical origins in the emergence of the capitalist economic arrangements of industrialised societies where those not engaged in the new forms of work could receive aid if determined as the deserving poor (Branson & Miller, 1989). The assessment of the disabled in this regard was assigned to medical, and later psychological, agencies because the impaired body or a difference in thought processes were identified with illness and pathology. The conceptualisation of disability within a medical model and the requirement that children be assessed and confirmed as deserving of aid (for example, the Ongoing Resource and Reviewable Scheme, ORRS ) continues today as the field of 'special education'. Special education exists to cater for children deemed sufficiently different that they do not belong as of right in the classrooms and schools designed for ordinary, undamaged and therefore more worthy children.

Although exclusion from ordinary education settings is clearly against the human rights of those excluded, if special education was effective education that resulted in recognised and valued academic and social learning, together with successful involvement in community life beyond school, this might be offered as some justification for segregating disabled children from others. But research strongly suggests that being part of ordinary classrooms and schools results in disabled children showing more academic and social learning and more integration into school and community contexts than disabled children placed in segregated special education classrooms and schools (Crawford & Porter, 2004; MacArthur, Kelly, Higgins, Phillips, McDonald, Morton & Jackman, 2005; UNESCO, 2005). Nevertheless, segregated special education remains at present as an integral feature of New Zealand education that allows mainstream schools to decline responsibility for disabled children grounded in a view of disability as damaged persons ineligible for an ordinary life.

On the basis of this view disability can be seen as a cultural issue in that the majority culture values disabled people less than others, and so does not see why it should meet the views and wishes of the disabled (Shakespeare, 1994). Within this cultural context disability also becomes a political issue of oppression and disempowerment, because the disabled need to advocate in order to receive the same rights to resources, such as education, that others in the community expect and receive as an entitlement of citizenship (Rizvi & Lingard, 1996). As American advocate, Doug Biklen (1988) has said, "[p]eople with disabilities are institutionalised, segregated and undereducated, socially rejected, physically excluded from public places and unemployed...they are not in need of treatment.." but of basic human rights (p. 128). The denial of these rights originates in the belief that disability involves persons who are lesser humans than others.

Bernadette Baker (2000) describes this approach to disability as the "new eugenics" which involves "an ableist normativity that fails to question its privilege..." (p. 692). In this context, schools and other socio-cultural agencies assume that one form of being is the desired goal for education and citizenship, and assume the right to modify non-complying children through "perfecting technologies" (p. 676). These interventions imply normative standards for how much time it should take to learn or to perform culturally valued tasks such as reading or conforming with classroom organisational processes. In this context disability is constructed as an "outlaw ontology" to be hunted down, assigned a medical-type label signifying disorder ("one could chose almost any letter of the alphabet [and] add a "D" to it..") and therefore justifiably removed or improved (p. 677). By removing for treatment those who do not conform they ensure that those who are deemed ordinary are not disturbed by those who are "pollutants and

detractors” (p. 676). Such harsh terminology reflects, I believe, the harsh realities for many disabled children and their parents.

Baker notes that research is clear in showing that assignment to remediation in special education is not effective and in particular is harmful to those from ethnic and working class groups who are significantly over-represented in segregated special provisions. In these cases what is labelled is “not simply a child but a culture” (Baker, 200, p. 684).

Baker suggests that because the power to rank and classify is deeply embedded in dominant cultures it is difficult for us to imagine an alternative world that would disrupt presently normative assumptions. This would require thought about the logic and effects of ableism and of similar judgements regarding who is to be valued and not valued, who is to count as “fully human” (p. 688), in a context that claims respect for human diversity.

Recent policy developments in New Zealand may represent a move in this direction. In *The New Zealand Disability Strategy* (Minister for Disability Issues, 2001) a medical model of disability is replaced with a social model in which disability is described as “the process that happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living...”(p. 1). The removal of these barriers, says the *Strategy*, will “change New Zealand from a disabling to an inclusive society” (p. 1). In this regard, and of particular importance, is the *Ministry of Education Statement of Intent 2007-2012* (Ministry of Education, 2007). The Ministry statement says that *The New Zealand Disability Strategy* is to be incorporated “throughout the education system” (p. 38) and that this will require “[s]ignificant changes across the system...to ensure that...no child is denied access to their local school because of their impairment” ( p.38).

Work toward education that is inclusive and that does not segregate disabled or other children whose cultural or experiential differences are not yet well catered for in many schools, will create a system in which there is no place for special education (Ballard, 2004a; UNESCO, 2005). Special education is a process of separating some children from others in terms of how we think about them, how we resource them, and how we teach them, and is therefore inevitably in opposition to the development of inclusion (Slee, 1996; Munoz, 2007).

Researcher, and former Deputy Director General of Education Queensland, Roger Slee, says that transforming education to include all children requires that we do not approach education as a “technical problem” of systems capability but as “cultural politics” focussed on the “protection of citizenship for all” (Slee, 2001, p.173). At present the dominant cultural position is that some children are of less value than others. This means that the political position of these children, their place in relations of power, is one in which they are unable to have their identity recognised and their needs met as of right. In this regard an inclusive education system will, for example, need to ensure the right to self- determination for Maori under the Treaty of Waitangi.

If we are to achieve the Ministry of Education’s intention to end the segregation of disabled children and to teach all children well, we will need to embark on a systematic transformation that will create a new form of inclusive school and that will give particular attention to good classroom teaching. For example, from extensive classroom observations the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS, Lingard & Ladwig, 2001) discussed classroom practice as a social justice issue related to distributive (“who gets how much”) and recognition (“what it is they are getting”)

forms of justice (p.135). The high intellectual demands and relational support of justice oriented education identified in the QSRLS are also indicated in the best evidence synthesis of quality teaching by Adrienne Alton-Lee (2003).

However, if we are to create inclusive education, then for many teachers we will need to achieve the most profound change in how they think about children and teaching. We will need to leave behind the separatist discourses of 'special' education with 'special' needs, 'special' classes and 'special' grants and funding. We will need to study disability theory to ensure that we can engage with the ways in which disability communities theorise and interpret their experiences as issues of culture, context, politics, identities and subjectivities (Mirfin-Veitch & Ballard, 2005; Slee, 1996; Shakespeare, 1994). We will also need to understand that 'inclusion' is an idea of complexity and uncertainty because it requires that we critique present education thought and practice in terms of how these are grounded in relationships of power, involving not just ableism, but also racism, social class and a neo-liberal ideology of individualism that acts against notions of interdependence.

### **Education and imagination**

Each of the four areas I have discussed in this lecture involves some people exerting power over others. In each case some people have designed a world predominantly for their way of living. By assigning to themselves greater status and control, and by constructing for themselves a "culture of contentment" (Galbraith, 1992) that normalises and justifies their organisation of the world, such dominant groups educate others into the inevitability and rightness of the arrangements they prefer (Apple, 1996). In these ways they act against the ideas of equity and interdependence that form a basis for distributive and recognitive forms of social justice.

To learn alternative ways of thought requires intellectual effort to identify and analyse the "ideological fog" behind which the mechanisms of oppression hide (Freire, 1998, p.6). An ideology, like a culture and a paradigm, involves a coherent set of ideas, assumptions, meanings and values that are carried in the language and discourses of the particular belief system. Education in New Zealand, for example, has been successfully colonised by a neo-liberal market ideology evident in its language in which talk of children and young people is replaced by a utilitarian talk of 'learners' (Ballard, 2004b). The complex intentions and creative uncertainties of education are replaced by talk of specified 'outcomes' (Ministry of Education, 2003) that may be purchased from both public and private sources (Margison, 1997). The historical and cultural meanings of our places of work, the early childhood centres, schools, polytechnics and universities, are diminished when they are all rendered in the language of commercial exchange as 'providers'. These are places that are 'audited' and that offer a curriculum that is the focus of a 'stock-take'. Each time this language is used, as it will be at this conference, the ideology of the neo-liberal market is further embedded and normalised. In this way the world is constructed as a place of separate, competing and consuming individuals and we move further from thought of interdependence, equity and shared rights.

In her book, *Inventing human rights*, American historian Lynn Hunt (2007) examines the people, events and writings that created the American "*Declaration of Independence*" in 1776, the French "*Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*" in 1789, and subsequent and ongoing understandings of the "rights of humans in society" (p. 21), that is, in relation one to another. Hunt suggests that human rights emerged historically from changes in how both the self and other were understood and from an

increasing sense of empathy, which requires a “leap of faith, of imagining that someone else is like you” (p. 32).

Hunt describes how eighteenth century novels, with heroes and heroines experiencing the trials and tribulations of everyday life, played a role in encouraging a readers “psychological identification” (p.41) with the aspirations, sufferings, gains and losses of people who were experienced as like themselves with a similar inner life of thought and emotions. I particularly like this idea because I encourage students to read the world through novels as well as through research, thus extending the knowledge that we might bring to critical scholarship (Ballard 2004c). But in any case, Hunt believes that the ‘invention’ of human rights requires “imaginative identification” (p.65) through which we place ourselves in another’s situation and can also anticipate that we ourselves may be the object of another’s feelings. Nevertheless, as Hunt shows, granting rights to some – such as Protestants, non-property owners, slaves – has consistently been easier to imagine than granting them to others, so that women had to wait until the twentieth century, around 124 years, before they gained equal political rights, and still only in some parts of the world.

The ongoing interpretation and revision of human rights, says Hunt, means that rights cannot be defined once and for all – a position that, for the same reasons, I suggest we should apply to the notion of inclusion in education. Hunt argues that while reason as well as empathy drives the ongoing development of our understandings of human rights, history shows that rights are best defended by feelings and an “inner sense of outrage” when rights are denied (p. 213).

Clearly, and from Hunts own example, a feeling of outrage must engage with a commitment to serious intellectual effort to analyse the contexts, processes and discourses that create harmful uses of power and to propose more just alternatives. We should include ourselves in this analysis because, as Nadine Gordimer (1995) suggests, oppression is maintained “in every situation of social intercourse” (p. 124), and because the classroom is a site in which justice and injustice is enacted (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Human Rights Commission, 2007). A challenge for teacher education in this regard is the need for greatly enhanced attention to theory, research and scholarship that will create the “intellectual rigour” (Freire, 1998, p.4) that is essential if teachers are to engage critically in the analysis of context as a key part of the cultural politics of teaching practice.

For example, social epidemiologist Richard Wilkinson (2005) examines context in the form of extensive comparisons of data across and within developed countries showing that greater inequality in a society is associated with significant inequalities in health and life expectancy; less cohesive relationships; less empathy and concern for the social good; deteriorating quality in family relationships; and greater levels of anti-social and violent behaviours. Wilkinson’s analysis supports the link between economic policy and social wellbeing that is also shown in the Ministry of Health and University of Otago (2006) research and in the United Nations reports I have referred to in this lecture. Environments of greater inequality place stress on the sociability of humans and harm their physical and psychological health (Dorling, Mitchell & Pearce, 2007). I suggest that attending to the link between income inequality and social cohesion would help us to understand issues such as the high level of violence against children in New Zealand (Hassall & Fanslow, 2006; Ministry of Social Policy, 1999).

Each of the four areas I have outlined in this paper involve social relationships in the immediacy of family, community and school contexts. They indicate how injustice is deeply embedded in our cultures and values. Using Freire's problem solving approach for social justice, Trevor Gale and Kathleen Densmoore (2000) suggest that we begin, as I have here, by examining situations close to ourselves. We should then move to critical examination of ever widening contexts to establish further understandings of the cultural, historical and ideological basis for injustice and the changes that are needed to establish more socially just values and relationships.

Also, it seems to me that unless we develop a stronger sense of community at a local level it will be difficult to address at a global level the impending crisis of human made climate change. I suggest that in the Pacific and beyond we either support one another to live fairly and well or, for each of us, our lives will be ones of increasing distress for which we will all have responsibility.

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