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SCHOOLING, CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we are proposing a fundamentally new look at education. We share with many, criticisms of existing policy and practice. 'Discovering Democracy' (1997) is one recent example distributed to Victorian schools. We doubt whether one 'discovers democracy'. Instead one develops citizenship skills through explicit attempts and practices required of democratic citizenship. This takes deliberate construction of experience and knowledge systems built into a students everyday practice. History and civics while important, represent only part of democratic values. There is a distinction here between what has been meant by 'civics', and citizenship education. We part company with many 'reformers' by concluding that proposed reforms will make a bad situation worse. Our general argument is, the world is faced with many problems. These problems cannot be solved without a democratic process, and becomes worse the more the intelligence of the public is insulted, it is known as a 'dumbing down' process. Essential to a democratic resolution of social and personal problems, is a reconstructed school that prepares all students to become effective problem solvers. The goal of each school is to prepare every student with 12 years of schooling to be informed and responsible citizens. We propose a school informed by a comprehensive general theory; we recommend a cognitive democratic theory. Our proposal, developed through three decades of collaborative applied research, has at least seven critical constructs or attributes. We contend that it is how each of these democratic constructs are

developed or advanced that will determine whether schools become more democratic. It is through their entwining that students are provided the opportunity to install the necessary principles of a democracy, that prepares them to assume the awesome responsibility of democratic citizenship. It must be understood at the outset that an ideal "democracy" is an unattainable goal. Democracy can only be a hypothetical vision used to measure progress much as infinity does in mathematics. Whether any practice is an asset or an impediment to the cause of democratic education can be determined by how it measures on each of the proposed attributes.

"The first(lesson) is that in the course of its late 20th century transformation into a series of academic disciplines, educational theory has become fragmented into a series of isolated and often contradictory 'findings' which, because they cannot find a place in any unified or integrated whole, are incapable of producing a coherent response to fundamental political questions about what the social purpose of education should be".

W. Carr & A. Hartnett (1997) *Education and the Struggle for Democracy*. Open University Press, Buckingham. (p. 9).

Introduction.

The theme of democratic education has always had its advocates in Australian education. It was Brown (1932: 24), that raised the question of the nature of educational control in education, and argued that the study of Civics had to be merged with the practice of citizenship (p, 91). McMahon-Ball (1936) was much more specific, and argued for the relationship between democracy and education. His work was strongly influenced by a considerable understanding of democratic education and citizenship. Australian democratic traditions emerged from a colonial culture and were melded into the process of nation building. The dramatic separation of the American colonies from Great Britain was not part of Australian history. Vigorous debate about maintaining the monarchist ties between Great Britain and Australia continues right until the end of the 20th. century. (November, 6, 1999, saw a constitutional vote defeated in Australia for severing ties with the British monarchy). While there is much to be admired about Australia's evolution towards democracy, the same cannot be said about the involvement of Australia's indigenous population. It has been a country with two nations. The aboriginal population has since Federation been denied a share in citizenship rights and entitlements; this was a shameful denial of the status of the aboriginal population as citizens without rights for much of Australia's political history. The indigenous aboriginal population in Australia finally received full voting rights in 1967 through a national referendum (Chesterman, et al, 1997). The Mabo decision (Rowse, 1993) *The Native Title Act*, 1993, and the Wik land rights decision through the High Court, December, 1996, were further steps toward a national reconciliation. However, there is still a difficult journey to be undertaken before reconciliation between white Australia and the indigenous population is achieved (Bachelard, 1997). Democratic rights and equity for the aboriginal population in 'land rights', health, education, work and housing have yet to be gained. Australia's Human Rights record this century toward the indigenous population has been a sad spectacle. The movement toward a more democratic schooling is inclusive toward minority rights. Presently, many would claim that these issues could be solved in that peculiar combination of centralized control and market discipline. This paper disputes this proposition, policy emerging from this combination has proved unsuccessful. In every country the movement towards democracy is tortuous. The struggle is to find ways for democratic values and an understanding of individual 'rights' to be reflexively part of a densely 'postmodern' culture, especially within the schooling system. Every generation needs to understand its own history and recreate democratic values in the context of a continually

changing culture. Efforts to promote 'informed and active citizenship' are presently under way in Australian schools, Macintyre, 1995; Boston, 1996: 5-6 ; Curriculum Corporation, 1997; Connect, 1996 ; Pearl and Knight, 1999 ; Civics and Education Project, 1997).

Making The Case.

Halprin (1999, 225) argues that 'a particular form of democratic association is fundamental to considerations of the nature, indeed the very practice, of inclusive schooling.' That's the easy part, making the case. Halprin's further point goes to the heart of the matter. Democratic involvement 'cannot be taken advantage of without creating new institutions of democratic practice that entail a significant degree of experimentation in democratic involvement (p 226).' Here we enter the arena of considerable challenge, for the meaning of democratic education is both ambiguous and highly contested terrain.

For example proponents of critical pedagogy and 'radical democracy' make considerable efforts at redefining democracy - which they propose is the making of working coalitions of various groups resisting conservative power - women, environmentalists, minorities, workers, 'marginalized groups', Ellsworth (1991), Hernandez (1997), Mouffe, et al, (1985), Mouffe, (1996), hooks, (1994), Trend (1995). Significant contributions made by feminist authors to the democratic debate are made by Phillips (1993), Pateman (1970, 1989). Barber (1992, 1984) adds to the debate with an understanding of the relationship between schooling, democracy and citizenship. Other significant writers include, Giddens (1994), Beck (1998), Sehr (1997), Carr and Hartnett (1996), Meier (1995).

However, when we enter the contemporary classroom, especially inner-urban, we find the present is described as "alienation, oppression, and subordination" not only for the students but also for teachers who are also imprisoned in a hegemonic system (Kanpol, 1997,25).

There are lessons to be learnt from the 'critical pedagogy'/ 'radical democratic' literature when making the case for democratic education as part of schooling policy and classroom practice. For example, practitioners of critical pedagogy while insisting that it is a coherent theory, fail to test their propositions, they emerge in general from abstract theorising. Theory construction in these terms is not derived from practice, in fact it is logically independent of experience. There appears no record of grounded accomplishment. It can neither inform short-term tactical improvements nor long range strategic restructuring. If democratic education' is to have schooling credibility it has to establish debate at the centre, emerging from grounded and tested program experience. Democracy as defined in this paper establishes debate at the centre - moving towards democracy means moving the centre, which if it is to be 'inclusive', means advocates or leaders in democracy having to establish credibility in the centre.

The cognitive democratic proposal being advocated in this paper is based on a set of egalitarian values which were the result of three decades of applied research and theory development, Pearl & Knight (1999, p. 2).

We present six attributes of democracy that have generally been recognized and we have applied them to education. These are: 1) the nature of educational authority, 2) the ordering and inclusiveness of membership, 3) the determination of important knowledge, 4) the definition and availability of rights, 5) the nature and participation in decisions that effect one's life. and 6) equality. We add a seventh which we believe derives from democracy - an optimal learning environment available to all students. It is the entwining of these different democratic requirements that will determine whether the school and classroom are able to

become more democratic. The long-term goal for the democratic classroom is that all students, upon completion of secondary schooling are capable of fulfilling the requirements of an informed, active, and responsible democratic citizen.

Each of these constructs can be sufficiently precise to meet the criterion of testability. Each is sufficiently robust to be tested for desirability. Each has sufficient history for credibility. To begin a discussion of democratic education without constructs (or principles), and without a record of accomplishment based on the application of such principles, is far worse than mere irresponsibility; it amounts to abandoning education to democracy's 'opponents' - *guardianship* and *anarchy* (Dahl, 1989).

Whether a school is able to become more democratic, will work to the extent that it draws on a solid body of evidence and the theory is so logically constructed as to be readily and universally understood. Proposed is that the beginning test should be small. Proposed also, is that democratic education attributes should be tested first in one classroom, and then with refinements over time that emerge from reflections from small-scale tests, extend findings to other classrooms.

A general overview of the democratic constructs will be briefly outlined with the intention of providing an example of how it can be positioned as viable educational theory. (A more detailed explanation of the research projects and knowledge development of these constructs **is found** in Pearl and Knight, 1999)

1). Authority. A democratic authority in the school, be it principal, teacher, administrator, advocate, coach, counsellor, or teacher aide, leads by persuasion and negotiation. Such authority is distinguished from its two 'opponents', *guardianship* and *anarchy* (Dahl, 1989). Students, particularly students currently ill-served by schools, bridle under one and are denied an education under the other. No education can be even minimally democratic, or inclusive, if no persuasive case can be made for it. No teacher can be minimally democratic and inclusive if she or he cannot make a persuasive case that what is being taught is worth learning, or, when students accept the value of the curriculum, the teacher cannot make a persuasive case that all students in the class are capable of mastering that which is being taught. The literature on critical pedagogy is somewhat difficult to comprehend in its stance on authority. Unsurprisingly they do not like what they see, but what they advocate is difficult to comprehend. There appears no responsibility of politics, struggle, and commitment as educational projects (Giroux, 1994, p 162)

radical educators tend to equate authority with forms of domination or the loss of freedom and consequently fail to develop a conceptual category for constructing a programmatic language of hope and struggle (1997a, p.100)

Giroux proposes "emancipatory authority" a term familiar to democratic advocates. However emancipatory authority is a mixed bag. It is:

teachers serving as transformative intellectuals with vision "of who people should be and how they should act within the context of a human community" (1997, p. 96), who legitimate "schools as democratic, counterpublic spheres and . . . work toward a realization regarding their views of community, social justice, empowerment, and transformation" (1997a, p. 96)

and engage in

educational practices that link democracy, teaching, and practical learning. The substantive nature of this task takes as its starting point the ethical intent of initiating students into a discourse and a set of pedagogical practices that advances the role of democracy within the schools while simultaneously addressing those instances of suffering and inequality that structure the daily lives of millions of people both in the United States and in other parts of the world (1997a, p. 96)

Emancipatory authority "empowers students to be critical and active citizens" (1997a, p 101) who (here Giroux cites Benjamin Barber's Strong Democracy 1984) are "capable of genuine public thinking, political judgment, and social action" (1997a, p.102)

Giroux contrasts emancipatory authority with liberal democratic authority as exemplified by Kenneth Benne who he chastises for:

"inadequate understanding of how power is asymmetrically distributed within and between different communities. . . remains removed from the lived social practices of students. . . (and promotes) a view of authority that appears abstract and disconnected from the struggles that define schools in their particular historical locations and specificity" (1997a, p. 99).

He further faults Benne and liberal democratic authority for its lack of linkage to the "collective struggles of teachers and its lack of specificity of community (Giroux, 1997a, pp. 99 -100)

Our criticism of emancipatory authority is that it is too abstract, too remote from student life, too insufficiently inclusive, and disconnected from 'real struggles that define schools in their particular historical locations and specificity'. While replete with powerful rhetoric, Giroux's idea of authority is unspecified nor are examples provided.

It is difficult enough to persuade and negotiate and avoid either imposing authority or abandoning it. Straitjacketing the teacher with restricted ideology that has not emerged from democratic struggle, and draws so little from its tradition, is unlikely to lead to democratic authority. There is wholehearted support for promoting the teacher as an intellectual presence, as distinguished from a technician; it seems absurd to dictate how such teachers should think or what they should think about, or what their students should think about. What Giroux proposes is not a democratic authority but a new vanguardism (that elsewhere Giroux condemns in others). This definition of critical pedagogy is a strident advocacy of vanguardism, in rhetoric, in sources of analysis, and definition of authority. When, what are needed are advocates for democracy. The major problem in attaining that objective is not the conditions under which teacher's work, although improving wages and conditions of teaching is a project that all interested in democratic education will enthusiastically support. The lamentable condition of teaching would be easier to solve if a larger problem did not stand in the way. The major reason we do not have more democratic classrooms is that the great majority of teachers either do not support democracy, or, they do not know or possess the skills and knowledge to move in a more democratic direction. We propose that persuasive authority helps solve the former and better prepares teachers to solve the latter.

Although the ideology of critical pedagogy defines the inner-city school to be rigid and authoritarian, the experience they describe is framed as chaotic and anarchistic - the classroom is described as a place where students ridicule their teachers and disparage the curriculum. In such situations anarchy is democracy's opponent that needs to be overcome by a persuasive and negotiable authority. Anarchy is not opposed by joining or applauding student resistance, nor by disrupting "social efficiency nightmares" (Kanpol, 1997, p. 26).

Neither anarchy nor guardianship is negated by "crossing borders" and speaking each other's languages, or by establishing an identity by dealing with our "otherness." Democracy in schools is advanced when students recognize that teachers have something important to share. That is difficult to advance when teachers are frightened or insecure.

There are serious lessons to be drawn from this literature for those of us concerned with democratic schooling. Not to acknowledge questions concerning power and authority in the school and classroom, considerably weakens our position to explain our theorising and epistemological foundations.

2). Inclusiveness and the democratic classroom.

A classroom is democratic and socially inclusive to the extent to which it welcomes all students as equally valued members of the school community. Separation and exclusion in its many forms need to be addressed by democratic education. Exclusiveness is found in the hierarchical education that has been powerfully reinforced over the past century. This hierarchy is manifest formally by tracking and ability grouping (e.g., Oakes, 1985, 1992; Oakes, Oraseth, Bell, & Camp, 1990), and informally by differential encouragement given students by classroom teachers (e.g., Cooper & Good, 1983; Good & Brophy, 1984, 1991; Pearl, 1972; Valencia, 1997; Slee, 1995; Lewis, 1999: 269-285).

Hierarchy is a necessary component of conservative thought (Kirk, 1986). Great effort has been made to establish a "scientific" legitimacy for an educational hierarchy (Valencia, 1997). The existence of a more democratic classroom depends on **demonstrating** that the different formulations of deficit thinking (i.e., the insistence that low income and students of colour are incapable of high level academic success), are false. Critical theorists attack hierarchical education with a vengeance. Hierarchy is viewed as a logical consequence of hegemony, but critical pedagogy falters when it fails to demonstrate that students allegedly suffering from cognitive, social or cultural deficits are as capable of academic success as those situated at the top of the social order. Without such demonstration, critical theorizing reduces to a rant and a "whinge" - a 'we could do better if only they would let us.'

Demonstration of the academic capability of low status, "at risk" students by Pearl and Knight (1999) is an important contribution to the inclusion debate. For over three decades they (and others) have successfully demonstrated that those labeled educationally deficient can be as academically successful as those deemed to be academically superior. Because critical theorists, while calling for democratic change, cannot bring itself to the practical consideration of producing such change, there has been an unwillingness to acknowledge such progress, even when reports of it are presented in academic forums (e.g., Amram, Flax, Hamermesh, & Marty, 1988; Carter, 1977; Edmonds, 1979, 1982, 1984; Pearl, 1972, 1991; Jones, et al 1982; Knight, 1977, 69-81).

Other forms of separation and exclusion undermine democratic education. The postmodern "celebration of difference" translates into flight to the margins. Moreover rather than celebrating difference, the ever smaller subdivisions become walled in enclaves each with its own peculiar argot, and as such, become impediments to meaningful communication. In the academy, the lack of an overarching vision results in an increased acrimony, and an increasing use of 'fabrication' selecting various representations (Ball, 1999a, 11).

Critical theorising has its own brand of exclusiveness. It is an exclusiveness that is the consequence of a non-negotiable ideology.

". . . the major consequence of this kind of uncompromising determinism is that it leaves insufficient space for the role of reflexivity in the process of practical change " (Carr, 1995, p. 113).

The primary focus on 'us versus them' manifest in sexism, racism, classism, homophobia - may contribute to the very problem that inclusive education ostensibly opposes .

"there are prevailing asymmetries of power, not just between teacher and student, but among students themselves, and it is in the playing out of these asymmetries which can lead quickly to the expression of the very 'isms' which the teacher seeks to educate away. 'Teaching the conflicts' may produce more conflict." (Hartley, 1997, p 91).

Democratic education, by definition, is deeply concerned with injustice and asymmetrical power. However, the democratic teacher does not allow inequity to be an excuse for poor student performance. Democratic authority responds to students when they claim to be treated unjustly, or have been victimised by abusive power, by suggesting ways that the problems raised can be made part of the curriculum, or, when injustice or abusive power interferes with a problem solving project, suggests ways to remedy that situation.

3) Important Knowledge-The democratic curriculum. A school is a place where students acquire important knowledge and develop important skills, or going there is a waste of time. Democratic education cannot be effective unless it is a persuasive and coherent response to existing curriculum directions. It will not be easy to enter a debate where curriculum and testing has become more centralised, where process is more important than content, and where it has become increasingly dumbed down and trivialised. With the complete collapse of dominant political party opposition to a deregulated global capitalism, education, and more specifically, curriculum and instruction, have been tied to the global economy. This merging and understanding of education has emerged as a salient political concern with leaders in major political parties in Australia, U.S., and England. Whatever their other merits, critical pedagogy and radical education have been unable to slow the advance of an ever more alienating curriculum, and where student choice is restricted. The evidence is overwhelming that all students (not just the poor, the neglected and the oppressed minorities) resist efforts to coerce them to master that which they find irrelevant. Even the few that excel do so for utilitarian reasons - as a necessary means to succeed in a credentialed society. One reason critical pedagogy has been so impotent in influencing curriculum policy is that they propose virtually nothing as an alternative. This is an important insight for proponents of democratic education. For example, Aronowitz and Giroux, two recognized leaders in critical pedagogy not too long ago suggested the following

...we have the rich traditions of progressive education and some strains in European Marxism to draw upon for an alternative that addresses curriculum quality. Recall that Gramsci called for broad scale mastery of language as a foundation for personal and social autonomy and specified that he meant Latin, Greek, and philosophy as core languages that put students in touch with the history of western civilization. Similarly, Leon Trotsky advocated a curriculum that would ask students to appropriate the history and literary traditions of bourgeois culture (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, p.214)

Antonio Gramsci is a noble and tragic figure, and if those who should have heeded his advice had -the Soviet and European communists - the world may be different today. But never serving as a classroom teacher (even in Montessori classrooms that Mussolini had endorsed in the early 1920s), arrested in 1926, spending all but his last few months of the remainder of his life in a Mussolini prison, and dying in 1937, does not qualify one to propose curriculum for today's imperfect democratic society. It is precisely the history and

literary traditions of bourgeois culture that students of all backgrounds resist so powerfully (belatedly recognised in the newer postmodernist versions of critical pedagogy).

Just what is important knowledge, and who decides what is or is not important? Important knowledge in this case, is that knowledge that students believe can be used to solve important problems. While ultimately it is the student that can decide what is or is not important, it nevertheless falls to the teacher to make a persuasive case for school derived knowledge. If no persuasive case is made for the importance of any school activity, students will resist or subvert, which of course is what is presently happening. From citing these examples critics of class room practice, and anti-democratic policy, make a career pontificating what appears to be the obvious. An example of the importance of the 'local' is described in a case study of teacher, parents and students resistance to state authority ordering school closure, and the loss of what the community defined as important cultural knowledge. This community (Northland Secondary College - Melbourne), struggled to maintain itself through legal process, court appeals, media campaign and community defiance over a two year period. Northland had long defined itself as a Community School, with a strong commitment to, and success in meeting the needs of Aboriginal (Koori) students. The school community fiercely challenged the increasing trend toward centralising curriculum, and what they interpreted as the State Department of Education ignoring the needs of Northlands' large indigenous population. The present corporate model of 'managerialism' directing State schooling, proved inadequate in dealing with the plurality and hybridity of a modern community, especially one inhabited with urban Aboriginal cultures (Knight, 1998, 295-308).

The following are brief highlights of four important social, and a range of important personal problems, a democratic education would assist student efforts to solve.

a. Important social problem : Preparation for democratic citizenship: dealing with asymmetrical power relationships. The primary purpose of public school is to prepare an informed and responsible citizen and that is also the major reason to resist all efforts at privatisation. Preparation for citizenship in a multicultural diverse society almost mandates that the education a person receives adequately mirrors that society. In addition, preparation for citizenship cannot be for some mythological society, but for the world as it is perceived by students and not just by the "good" students. Such an education must deal with the real problems of that society. In preparation for citizenship students are not sheltered, the classroom instruction is organized to respond to the entire range of student perceptions of government and power.

In this school, students learn to be responsible citizens by being citizens in situations where they are able to exercise ever increasing power, and in situations where they have very little power, and use both to develop an understanding of citizenship responsibility. In preparing for citizenship, students invent government by establishing their classroom as a model government, which, unlike current student government, addresses significant issues. A student government organised to prepare competent citizens, guarantees its citizens certain inalienable rights, establishes rules, deals with rule violators, makes executive decisions and raises and spends money. In creating a student government, students study history, not for passive mastery of content to meet some externally established standard, but to understand the logic of the unresolved debate of critical issues that resulted in the creation of particular laws, policies and practices. Students inventing government deal with a wide range of issues, among which are: Do we need government? If, yes what should it do? What should it not do? What kind of legislative body should it have? What is the logic for two legislative houses? At the class level would not direct democracy be preferable to representative government? When does size become a factor? When should direct (everyone involved in every decision) give way to representative government? At the school level? Council?

State? Country? Is it possible to have both direct and representative government? Should the Australian constitution be amended to include a Bill of Rights? What are those rights as "practical powers" (Tawney), and why are they important? Are they equally important today? Is it necessary to have checks and balances in State and Federal government? What are the arguments for a democratic republic in Australia? What is necessary today to insure against abuse of power, e.g., *unaccountable* government?

Encouraging students to do penetrating research and extensive analysis will help students appreciate the fragility of democracy and why it will always be an unfinished project.

The students in a democratic classroom develop a justice system, which they subject to thorough analysis and assessment to ascertain whether what they create meets a standard of fairness, and whether it is efficient or effective, i.e., deters undesired behaviors. The logic developed at the classroom can be applied to larger systems, e.g., the criminal justice system of the state with particular emphasis on such advertised campaigns as "Three Strikes," the "War on Drugs," "Victim's Rights," 'Zero tolerance' drug legislation, differential treatment by race, class and ethnicity.

Fiscal decisions in student government can be used to open up discussion of national, state and local tax policies. If students deal with significant issues, the classroom as government will not reach consensus on anything of importance, but it will develop citizens who can propose law, policy and practice and defend those proposals with logic and evidence in open debate.

Will students participate in such government? In general, yes. Will it lead to empowerment? By itself, more than what students currently have, and as a component in a coherent democratic school, as much empowerment as a democratic citizen should have. Charles Hollins insists that the student government in Upward Bound program at the University of Oregon, in which he was first a participant and later its director worked precisely because its student government was real. For the first time in their lives students exercised substantial power and because that experience helped overcome rampant cynicism, it was a critical element in the program's significant success (Hollins, 1991).

Is government the only place where citizenship is practiced? Of course not. Citizenship is an important attribute in a variety of formal and informal institutions, associations and communities. However, government is the ultimate regulatory instrument in any society, and ignoring government or withdrawing energy from it does not alter its capacity to make decisions that affect us all.

Asymmetrical power should never be allowed to discourage students from trying to right wrongs or otherwise be involved in the workings of government. It is only in unreal idealised myth that parity of power can exist. Students will encounter power imbalances throughout their lives, including those classrooms created as model governments where strenuous effort is made to insure that everyone has equal power. Democratic education works to reduce imbalance, but it also works to help students deal with existing inequitable power relationships. Students are encouraged to actively participate in every phase of established government. They are given opportunities to participate in election campaigns, to lobby for legislation at local, state and federal levels and otherwise become involved and then discuss and reflect on those activities. They research and then debate in depth the salient issues of the time: "Affirmative Action," bilingual education, indigenous land rights, various responses to crime, national education standards, Australia's role in S.E. Asia, GST tax strategies, etc. The teacher in a democratic classroom strives to ensure that the each issue is given balanced treatment and raises questions and proposes further research when student's efforts are superficial or severely biased.

In addition to student government, students learn to become effective and enlightened citizens by engaging in, and reflecting on, a variety of co-operative learning activities and meaningful community services. Green (1996) supports this case for a revitalized citizenry through school curriculum and decision-making. Adding to this support is the position of Whitty, Power and Halprin (1998, 140), who argue that if we want students to learn democratic citizenship, we need to put in place 'structures of learning which embody those principles'.

A not dissimilar perspective is also held by proponents of critical pedagogy, at least through Mouffe's "radical democracy" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 1989; 1992; 1996). We believe as she does that in a democratic education there is acceptance of "the permanence of conflicts and antagonism" (1996,20). We and she see human rights as necessary to "secure freedom and equality for all" (1996, 21). She builds her case for rights more on constitutional guarantee than we do. As important as the United States Constitution is, it has been a wobbly position for many groups during periods of U.S history (as critical pedagogy has repeatedly emphasized). This is a lesson to be learnt by Australian advocates of democratic education. If rights are going to be more durable and made more universal, students will need more than universal protection; they will need to invent, reinvent and apply rights to changing contexts. Rights are not to be discovered by top down mandates, but rather are invented by students in interaction with each other, and with the help of persuasive and negotiable authority.

There are aspects of citizenship here, but so remote from primary and secondary school life as to be a detriment rather than an asset; especially in assisting students to a rightful share of power in a system where power is inequitably distributed. This version of radical democracy suffers from incompleteness, school democracy has to start where she leaves off. Like far too much of critical pedagogy it eschews practicality almost as a virtue.

b. Important social problem : Preparation of the work world and learning how to change it. Students are well aware of the relationship between schooling and work. Understanding the purpose of schooling must include an analysis of the dependence of destination. Schools in the past have been described as institutionally structured and rigidly sorted by virtue of presumed destination of students. Work creation is off the agenda, analysis by class division is in. Presently, work and schooling and the subsequent exit points, are described as reproductive of class origin and social class divisions, Ball, et al, (1999: 195-224). Students know that the best jobs go to those with advanced education. They also become aware early in their school career whether higher education is in the picture for them. It is this hierarchical track system that critical pedagogy condemns. However, attacking an unfair system does not change it and given the zero sum nature of the work world, every success story for an at risk youth comes at the expense of someone else. Encouraging all equally to strive for the best jobs are one of the few absolutes in democratic education, but that is only half the story. It is also important that all students be encouraged to become economists. All students should be able to debate economic policy -- to weigh the pros and cons of an unregulated global capitalism, to determine the role of the government in job creation, to seriously debate the most desirable approach to marginal tax rates, to evaluate the use of a tax strategy that would bring the upper and lower segments of the economic order closer together, to assess the benefits and liabilities of the use of regulatory power as a means to curb excesses of an unregulated global economy Hutton, (1999). Democratic theorists ought to be concerned with inequity and perceive how hierarchical education advances social reproduction, its recommendations for remedy here, as everywhere must have *specificity* and draw upon *meaningful* experience.

c. Important social problems: Developing a democratic culture. Carrington (1999, 261) makes a strong case for inclusion needing a different school culture. This reculturation of

schooling thesis is an important adjunct to the positioning of inclusive education, and draws upon democratic theory. At the present time youth are more concerned about culture than they are about citizenship or work. The young are enveloped by cultures. From these youth cultures they develop tastes and basic values. Culture is a powerful influence on youth and it cannot be ignored in the classroom. Inadequate understanding of youth and culture is largely responsible for the tragic consequences of a failed war on drugs. Culture has a huge influence on youth violence and teen-age sexuality. Postmodernists have analyzed popular culture to death with little productive result.

Culture is an important curricular component in the democratic classroom.

We believe the goal of the democratic classroom is to **reconstruct** culture. The reconstruction would involve encouraging students to institute those transformations that result in a more democratic culture, whose values some have already been enunciated.

Culture has always been an important, if not the most important concern of schools. Not only do youth on the whole, and adult authority in schools have fundamentally different understandings of culture, increasingly adults are at war with themselves over what should be included in the treatment of culture. Diversity and multiculturalism have become salient as well as contentious issues in schools, and teachers are exposed to a very diverse infusion of multiculturalism in both pre and in service professional development. Neither the teacher development programs nor the culture wars have had significant impact on students. If Shakespeare was alive today and observed the cultural wars in schools, he'd probably keep the title but write a very different *Much Ado About Nothing*, or culture wars is what is referred to in *Macbeth* in the "full of sound and fury signifying nothing" soliloquy.

Youth fascination with popular culture in its most simple terms reflects the deadliness of schooling. The remedy is to be found in the involvement of students in the creation of democratic culture. A democratic culture by definition welcomes diversity - it begins, however, with the recognition that diversity can only be welcomed when there is a centre to which all feel a positive sense of attachment. That centre cannot be imposed. It cannot be forced down the throat of students. It will not be found in universal recognition of oppression. It must be negotiated. Here, the test of the persuasive teacher will be the ability to maintain a negotiating process, which at times will be confrontational and volatile. We have learned through experience that democratic culture begins with a very small center, especially if the effort to create it, is during a time of crisis.

In the formation of a democratic culture, the centre can be small if diversity is welcomed as spokes that enter into the center (refer attachment 1). The interests of a democracy are served if the center grows through ever more meaningful discussion, debate, research, and a variety of cooperative interactions that will lead to the sharing of values, beliefs, musical tastes, etc. With the growth of the centre, mutual understanding replaces myopia and prejudice, and more of the what was in the spokes become shared components or features of a new and more democratic culture. The content of the centre will be different in different schools, but the process of patiently, and with humour, negotiating common ground and building on that, is essential. Whether the centre grows and becomes more democratic largely depends on how persuasive a teacher is in encouraging students to bring to the centre for exploration and debate the important values of a democracy--persuasive and negotiable authority, inclusiveness, decisions made on the basis of knowledge and reason, universal participation, finite but inalienable rights, working together to produce an optimum learning environment, and equality. For the centre to grow the teacher helps student learn how to disagree without being disagreeable.

Because critical pedagogy has embraced postmodernism it has become far more trendy pedagogy than a truly critical pedagogy--it doesn't take much analysis to realize that postmodernism is incompatible with democracy. Postmodernism moves comment to the margins - democracy establishes debate at the centre - moving toward democracy means moving the centre which if that is to be done democratically, means advocates or leaders in democracy have to establish credibility in the center- something critical pedagogy works hard not to do.

Giroux quotes Benjamin Barber favorably in describing the democracy he supports - but neglects to mention Barber comments about postmodernism.

The first business of educational reformers in schools and universities—multiculturalists, feminists, progressives—ought to be to sever their alliance with esoteric postmodernism; with literary metatheory (theory about theory); with fun-loving, self-annihilating hyperskepticism. As pedagogy these intellectual practices court catastrophe. They proffer to desperate travelers trying to find their way between Scylla and Charybdis a clever little volume on Zeno's paradoxes. They give to people whose very lives depend on the right choices a lesson in the impossibility of judgment. They tell emerging citizens looking to legitimize their preferences for democracy that there is no intellectually respectable way to ground political legitimacy. (1992 p. 125)

d.Important personal problems. An important goal of the democratic classroom is to graduate a person who knows how to be healthy and fit, and is capable of warm and wholesome relationships as neighbour, ally, mate, parent and friend. A democratic education helps students with the widest range of personal problems, which would necessarily include the use of control substances, school violence, the treatment of students who violate school rules, homophobia, race and gender relations, sexually transmitted disease, and responsibility for children born to them.. Currently, all of these problems tend to be taken out of student's hands and given to adult authority, whose decisions are increasingly draconian. In a democratic education, these problems are included in the curriculum for students to study and solve by developing understandings, and ways of living that are agreeable for self and others.

4) Rights.

In this version of a democratic classroom, students are guaranteed a finite number of very specific rights. If the foundation for a democratic education is to be established, student rights will be few in number (at least originally), will be universal and inalienable - everyone in the school is protected by them, and they cannot be taken away by whim of adult authority - and while there is a necessary connection between rights and responsibilities, in a democracy rights precede the responsibilities. Students enter a democratic classroom with rights established, and then learn to be responsible. In the authoritarian classroom rights are subordinate to responsibility. Only the responsible are allowed rights. We believe this reversal of a logically appropriate order contributes unnecessarily to classroom disruption and inequitable treatment of students.

Only four rights have stood the test of time: (1) the right of free expression, (2) the right of privacy, (3) the right to a special kind of due process, (presumption of innocence, right not to testify against self, right to counsel, right to trial by independent and impartial jury, and protection against cruel and unusual punishment) and (4) the right of movement (i.e., not to be a captive audience).

Part of the mandate of a democratic classroom is to help students define rights. Such a discussion is likely to most profitable when the teacher advances the notion that a right *is any unbridged activity that does not restrict the activity of others, or, require from others some special effort*. With such a definition, freedom of expression becomes a right because one person's expression does not prevent another from also expressing him-or-herself. By the same logic, respecting one person's privacy does not invade another's privacy; due process for one does not come at the expense of the due process for another; and one person's freedom of movement does not inhibit another's.

Rights, by this definition, must be few in number. Because they are so few and so important, their exercise must be scrupulously protected. For that to happen rights should be considered from two perspectives: one, rights are an important curriculum issue to be defended, refined and extended by students and two, rights should exist prior to student entrance into school and thus define the nature of relationship between adult authority and students (as well as between administration and teachers). What is troubling, is the extent to which prevailing school practice and curriculum fosters contempt, for one of the underpinnings of the cultural and legal definitions of democracy.

Currently, in and out of school, the denial of rights has gained momentum stimulated by a growing fear of crime and violence. It is precisely at this time that the defense of rights is most important, Gill, et al, (1988, 246-282).

School Charters and discipline codes, calling for inhibiting the expression of homophobic, patriarchal and racist views, and silencing unacceptable voices, does not change attitudes, nor does such oppression help build a democratic community. Democratic teachers try to persuade all students to critically examine their views and develop ground rules by which open interchanges can occur across the widest range of difference. This is no easy task. It often requires small-group inter-changes. It becomes easier to the extent to which students are guaranteed rights of expression, privacy, due process and movement. Rights are a necessary assurance for those reluctant to express their opinions. It is difficult to conceive of a democracy without established rights, and it is difficult to understand how proponents of any perspective that opposes oppression, doesn't highlight the importance of rights as the first line of defense against oppression.

5) The nature of participation in decisions that affect one's life.

Democracy, almost by definition, is government by the means that people participate in the decisions that effect their life. Here, we confront two major problems. One, a decreasing number of individual's commitment to participate in citizenship activities, and this is **specialy** true for youth. Two, those that do participate are too often insufficiently informed to be responsible citizens. We have through a variety of changes become consumers of politics, not producers of politics.

For an education to be democratic all students have to be prepared equally to exercise a responsible vote, and all have to be equally skilled in the participation process. Given the level of apathy and hostility to government, rousing students to citizenship will be a challenge. Earlier their was a discussion of the importance of organizing school derived knowledge for the solution of important social and personal problems, it will also be necessary to organise classroom activities to create opportunities for ALL students to develop a variety of citizenship arts. These arts would include the ability: to engage in civil exchanges with a wide range of others, to listen attentively to a wide range of others and to take pains to understand what is being said, to develop coherent proposals based on logic and evidence, to negotiate differences between what others propose are negotiable, and to hold one's ground when differences are not negotiable (and be able to distinguish the

difference), to learn how to organise a constituency in support of a proposal, and to learn how to meld coalitions with other groups on particular issues.

There is much talk about citizenship in newer versions of democratic education, but not included in sufficient manner, is an identification of necessary citizenship skills and knowledge. For example, part of critical pedagogy's understanding of citizenship deals with identity and the multifaceted complexity (i.e., confusion) that postmodernists and various others have brought to it. Identity will continue to fragment until it **is recognised** that informed democratic citizenship is essential to a healthy identity, and a socially inclusive school culture.

6) Establishing optimum environments for learning. Democracy is more desirable than either of its opponents because only under democracy is everyone encouraged to reach her or his potential. Democracy is superior to a guardianship that stifles growth through constraint, control and commitment to established hierarchy. Democracy is superior to an anarchy that inhibits growth through the removal of persuasive leadership. However, democracy can only establish itself to be superior when the conditions of optimal learning are identified and made universally available. Here is encountered what should be a remarkable phenomenon. As important as optimal learning environment is to democracy and inclusive education in general, there is not an impressive body of knowledge to serve as foundation. One reason for the lack emphasis on the learning environment in education has been the preoccupation on individual differences and voices. In fact, one definition of democratic education (a warped one from this perspective) is its capacity to match a particular education program to the assessed educational potential of the learner. That kind of thinking produced the multiple track secondary school system where only a fraction of the student body is deemed to possess the capability to succeed in the university - everyone else has an attributed intellectual deficit. The great bulk of debate has centered on the etiology of these attributed deficits. Are they genetic? (Burt, 1972; Jensen, 1969 ; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Accumulated environmental? (Deutsch, 1967; Hunt, 1961). Inadequate socialisation? (Moynihan, 1965). Or cultural ? (Lewis 1961; 1966). That there is a very high correlation between deficits, regardless of imputed origin, and class, race, ethnicity and gender should come as no surprise. It is the differential education that students receive on the basis of attributed deficit that leads to the phenomenon of social reproduction rightfully and regularly condemned by critical pedagogy.

The attribution of deficits, and organizing education formally and informally on that basis becomes a real challenge to those striving for social inclusion and equality, and therefore toward democratic education. The literature on student motivation tends to mingle individual characteristics (i.e., deficits) and the social environment and thereby does more to confuse than enlighten. However, it is possible to isolate and define aspects of the environment that correlate with high student performance. Students achieve more if the classroom is designed to encourage a sense of competence, a feeling of belonging and a sense of ownership (See Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998 for a summary of research literature on student motivation). Although indicating the importance of the environment to student learning is an encouraging step in the direction of democratic education, we believe it is insufficient. Democratic education should bring together in a coherent and integrated fashion a number of encouragement's. Identified are ten, that when integrated, provide students with as close to optimum learning environment that is currently possible.. These are:

a) Encouragement to risk. Decreasingly the classroom has become a place where students take chances. There is too much to lose and not enough to gain when students risk opinions and challenge authority. The emphasis on high stakes testing (fraudulently defined as standards) and increased effort to control student behaviour only serves to discourage risk.

b) Elimination of unnecessary discomfort. Classrooms are not very comfortable places. Some discomfort is unavoidable, but our concern is with those discomforts that are avoidable and routinely become part of classroom practice- public humiliation, boredom and loneliness.

c) Meaning. Meaning is an important gratification. Humans struggle to make sense of their world. Meaning has two definitions. One deals with utility, how can I use what I am being asked to learn. The other is understanding what is expected of me in the classroom. Current efforts to persuade students of the utility of school derived knowledge is perfunctory and unpersuasive, particularly for those who are not encouraged to consider higher education; and insufficient attention is given to the latter consideration, and again this is most true for the students deemed to lack promise..

d) A sense of Competence. A good part of the teacher's life is devoted to establishing a ranking of competence, but competence is too narrowly and arbitrarily defined, and often is tangentially related to academic performance and often becomes instead a reward for docility. With competence it is not so much what students have done, but more what they are encouraged to believe they can do that determines student performance. In other words with the research that has been conducted, competence, so much now believed to be an individual attribute, may be more a function of the learning environment.

when individuals have a positive sense of their ability and efficacy to do a task, they are more likely to choose to do the task, persist at it, and maintain their effort. Efficacy and competence beliefs predict future performance and engagement even when previous performance is taken into account.
(Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998, p.75).

e). Belonging. Humans are a gregarious species. If the school does not take pains to welcome all students as full-fledged members of centripetal learning community, students not so welcomed will search elsewhere to gratify a need for belonging. (Knight, 1997, 79-97) One quick glance into any secondary school shows where students go for belonging. A small percentage is part of a learning community. Some are school acceptable as athletes (but that has its problems), some strive to be popular. Some other groupings are indifferent to schooling, and some are overtly hostile, e.g., gangs, 'druggies' and truants. Research indicates that co-operative learning is one strategy that can facilitate feelings of belonging and breakdown race antagonisms (Slavin, 1996).

f) Usefulness. Uselessness is a dreaded condition. In the democratic classroom Goethe's oft-quoted "A useless life is early death" is taken seriously. Enforced uselessness is cruel punishment and yet enforced uselessness is the essence of existing classrooms. Schools are organised for future usefulness. Students are asked to put their life on hold as a kind of promisory note. In a democratic classroom activities are organized for immediate utility. The problems students solve are problems students perceive to be real and important. All students are recruited to help with the instruction and serve in many different capacities. All engage in cross age tutoring, all share the results of research to the class, all have valuable roles to play in co-operative education projects. All engage in community service that is integrated within the curriculum. All are part of a socially inclusive curriculum.

g) Hope. Hopelessness now comes at us from many directions. Pessimism is reflected in opinion polls and loss of confidence in one's ability to influence one's future (Morin, 1995). Pessimism and social exclusion is becoming the one common characteristic in modern post-industrial life -middle class and poor, Black and White alike fear the capitalist dream is not for them. In a democratic classroom serious effort is made to equally encourage all students to be hopeful. But it is more than mere optimism. In a democratic classroom all students are

given reasons to be hopeful, they are encouraged to dream and keep their options open. Problems are presented as opportunities for the creation or discovery of solutions.

h. Excitement. Excitement is a legitimate and important human need. Excitement is not a term student's associate with classrooms. Excitement is another hallmark of the democratic classroom. Classrooms can be designed to be exciting if teachers are willing to relinquish control, and students are encouraged to participate in activities where they generate important knowledge, make important discoveries and participate in important decisions.

i. Creativity. Humans are, by nature, a creative species. Each generation creates a new world. In a democratic class all students are encouraged to be constructively creative and to use creativity for community building, i.e., to make the class a far more interesting, exciting and creative place than is currently the case; and, far more interesting, exciting and creative than any of the proposed highly advertised "reforms."

j. Ownership. Students are motivated to learn if they believe that learning is in their or their community interest. If everything done in the class is done to please or impress some external authority, performance suffers.

All of this should call for a re-examination of intelligence - intelligence should be considered an ecological attribute --it is the expression of individual capacity to learn under optimal learning conditions. If the measurement of "intelligence" is attempted under varying learning conditions, then the measurement is obviously flawed. If the same type of persons exhibit similar intelligence scores over time and space, it may be less a measure of consistency of intelligence by race, ethnicity, class and gender, but may reflect the consistency of unequal encouragement over space and time.

What has critical pedagogy to say about optimal learning conditions? It is difficult to decipher.

. . . I now teach foundations courses in a system that concurrently failed but also made me. Yet I talk about my own deficiencies, limitations, and the like, all the while getting students to challenge their own personal limitations and relationships to forms of alienation, oppression, and subordination . . . Teaching for me presents a platform to both critique the present social and cultural structure as well as find ways to etch out possibility and hope in the face of social efficiency nightmares. (Kanpol, 1997, pp.25-26)

7. Equality. Equality is a vital principle in democracy and it also difficult to define and difficult to achieve, no matter how defined. Effective social movements in Australia for example have been organized to make the society more equitable. Here, race gender, class and sexual orientation have been prominent. In the 20th century the campaigns for women' suffrage, the organization of industrial workers and indigenous voting rights (finally granted in 1967) are progress toward equality. Sadly, history teaches us that progress made can also be lost. Moreover, however one might assess progress toward a more effective reconciliation, it is generally acknowledged that at our best we still have a ways to go.

The position forwarded here, is that whether equality is attainable is a political question that cannot be ascertained in advance. Moreover, while absolute equality is beyond reach, progress toward such a goal is realistic and that is what a democratic education strives for. Progress toward greater equality can only be made if the processes by which inequality are maintained, can be precisely identified, and specific action taken to reduce their effect. Encouraging results have been produced with programs focused on the elimination of deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997; Pearl, 1991), meaning, the ten conditions for optimal learning

previously mentioned, and when they are made available to all equally. Equality thus is operationalised as equal encouragement. With programs conducted over a period of three decades Pearl and Knight (1999, 245-289) have found that when they tried to equally encourage all students, much of the differences by race, ethnicity and class disappears (Hollins, 1991).

Moving Toward Democracy.

This paper was divergent from the majority of democratic theorists and 'critical' advocates cited in the bibliography. It outlined at the outset a series of democratic constructs or principles derived from three decades of school-based research. Emerging from this research, was the development of specific knowledges and experience inside the classroom and school, aiming at the formation of public democratic citizenship.

The democratic classroom is inclusive. It welcomes diversity, even diversity that has the potential of being anti-social. It welcomes social and cultural diversity. Musical taste, weakly formed political views, diet, sports will express diversity in the classroom as will cultures, recreational interests, dress, religious affiliation, and race, gender, or ethnic identity. These are differences that schools should welcome and bring into classroom discussion.

Democratic education has for all its historical struggle for legitimacy been impeded by authoritarian and oppressive forces. It has been badly battered by its twin opponents, anarchy and guardianship (Dahl, 1989). From the 1970's on, democratic education lost support from those groups of people who had been most victimized by a lack of democracy in the past. Whether democratic education is a feasible project cannot at this time be given a definitive answer. What can be defined definitively is the consequences of resurgent authoritarianism, environmental destruction, increased crime, more social breakdown, unending wars, tribal cleansing, poverty, Kaplan, (1994, 44-76).

Every tentative movement toward democratic education was undermined or ignored during during the 1980's. Authoritarian control was reestablished through corporate management policy. Curriculum and evaluation in turn became more centralized and rigid, and student choice was markedly restricted. By the late 1990's the conservative thrust had failed to accomplish any of its objectives. Scores on standardized tests flattened out after small gains. The present market encourages a form of academic cleansing in each school. Too many school Heads, teachers and parents in State schools are anxious that students likely to perform poorly are sorted in exams. Schools have acted out serious selection processes for incoming students in order to cull only those students who will contribute to mainstream results and desirable behaviour, Gerwitz, et al, (1995). Teacher education courses centred around developing teachers to impliment a state-centred curriculum. Divisions within and between schools sytems widened; and students did not respond positively to new forms of control and management authoritarianism. A generation of students were 'at risk', and youth cultures were enlarging, Knight (1997: 79-97). The concept of youth destination became a non-issue within the newer individualized criteria. The present market driven ideology in state schools has proven inadequate. Of most significance to this paper, student interest in and informed investment in civic responsibility, has declined precipitously.

Conclusion.

Offered here is a particular prospectus on democracy. It has no special virtue, except that if it errs at all, it errs on inclusiveness. A valuable attribute of the government school, given its cultural diversity, is that each school has an array of visions to debate. (Even though present policy and practices attempt to undermine this value). Seldom will people welcome democratic education with open arms, it will need an organised advocacy, driven by clearly

defined theory. Citizenship skills proposed in this paper will be through action and reflection. Schools in general are presently not providing an education for those approximately forty per cent that resist the traditional subject-based curriculum, and single exit point at year twelve. Thought needs given to be given to Goodson (1984), and his argument that a major function of a subject-based traditional curriculum, may simply reproduce the few that can master their demands (and sometime fabrication), of decontextualised and abstract bodies of knowledge. The new 'do-it yourself curriculum' demands that schools develop a new common general education, and be inclusive of a more differentiated 'vocational education' that attracts individual students and their talents. With the advent of postmodernism with which critical pedagogy has become entangled, less and less is at stake in broader political arenas. Democracy to postmodernists is opportunity and promise, and is perceived by them as mere fable and its advocates guilty of arrogant deceit.

Despite some temporary fits and spurts in a democratic direction, schooling continues to be antagonistic to democracy. Too many students look elsewhere to get a sense of the world and their responsibility to it. Strong constituencies (both school and subject association) are marshalled to maintain the present educational system. Attractive to many in these groups is a sense of irony that is valued as more important than a vocabulary of explanation, Rorty, (1989: 73). While students resist authoritarianism, they are no better off because of that resistance. They too often enter the world ill-equipped and overwhelmed by feelings of helplessness. That condition is the logical consequence of the education they receive. It is in the context of history that we believe democratic education should be given a serious test. Ultimately, we support democratic education because it enlists and prepares students for informed participation in efforts to solve problems critical to our survival as a species.

A more democratic education will not become a reality by some top down dictum, nor will it emerge by 'steering from afar.' It will emerge, as all true democratic movements have and should, from the development of a local organization building on small successes. Democratic education, given the nature of the times, its initial growth will be one classroom at a time, until it catches on, and grows as democracy must grow, exponentially.

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