Learning to 'become somebody well': Challenges for Educational Policy

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Abstract

This article argues that education has a role in promoting young people's wellbeing. It draws on research on young people's lives to highlight the changing world for which educators prepare young people. While older educational agendas such as literacies and numeracy remain significant, it is argued that education is increasingly important for its role in assisting young people to develop the capacities and skills that will enable them to live well and that will enhance social cohesion. Although these more recent social agendas are often acknowledged in significant policy documents, their enactment in schools is compromised by economistic policy imperatives that see young people primarily in terms of their capacities to attain labour market skills that will ensure Australia's international competitiveness. I make a link between the work that young people do to make themselves, and wellbeing, highlighting the role that education plays in shaping identities – and in enabling them to 'become somebody well'. The article concludes that health and wellbeing are marginalised in school curricula not because of a 'crowded curriculum' but because not all elements are given equal value within our current policy frameworks.

Introduction

The goals of promoting individual and social wellbeing and social cohesion through education pose significant challenges for educational policy. Many policy documents, from state level (Department of Education and Training 2002) national level (Watson 2003) and international level (OECD 2001) explicitly recognise the role of education in promoting individual and social wellbeing and social cohesion. These documents acknowledge that the emergence of new social and economic realities means that the world for which we are preparing young people is changing, and we may need to offer new areas of learning and promote new skills. While older educational agendas, especially in relation to ensuring literacies and numeracy, remain relevant, wellbeing is being seen as a new area of relevance to education. This recognition draws on emerging understandings which define health as more than simply the absence of disease and infirmity. Social understandings of health have moved away from a focus on pathology, and instead employ the concept of wellbeing, which may be defined as access to resources, material and cultural, that sustain life at a high level of satisfaction (Levin & Browner 2005).

I argue that a focus on wellbeing in education is important today because of the conditions under which young people are living. It has become increasingly necessary for young people to have the skills and capacities to manage uncertainty and complexity. In order to illustrate this point very briefly, I draw from the longitudinal *Life-Patterns* study of Victorian youth who were educated in the 1980s (Dwyer & Wyn 2001). The following brief quotes are selected reflections on what has happened to them since they left school, highlighting the tenuous links between education and employment and the need to be flexible and capable of managing change:

> Often it takes people longer to discover what they really want to do. They do this by changing education streams and job opportunities and then finally find something they like doing. It took me a long time, many courses and different experiences, but I finally got what I enjoy (30 year old male).
>
> I never knew what I wanted to be in high school and still don't. Most of my friends are the same. Even ones who did know are now looking into other areas of employment. The days of staying in one job forever are gone. I can't see myself in this job (nurse) much longer. So underpaid compared to people in business areas (31 year old female).
>
> Social and health balance has become increasingly important to my lifestyle. I have learned to enjoy the journey rather than focus on the destination (31 year old male).

Their comments underline the importance of attending to new educational tasks associated with the formation of identities and personal capacities that equip today's young people to manage their lives in times of uncertainty. Throughout their journeys, concern about their mental and physical health has been a constant theme for participants in our research, as they have struggled to create a balance between work and other activities (Dwyer, Smith, Tyler & Wyn 2005). On the whole they do not feel that their school education prepared them very effectively to live well in changing times. Their views raise important questions about what role formal education should have in our changing society and what approaches educational policies should promote in order to prepare young people to live well.

Since the 1980s there has been an explosion of health-related programs and interventions in schools in recognition of emerging health issues such as: relatively high rates of mental health problems including depression and anxiety disorders amongst young Australians (Donald, Dower, Lucke & Raphael 2000, Sawyer 2002); reduced rates of physical activity; and obesity (Gard & Wright 2001). Although these developments have raised the profile of education in promoting skills and capacities for wellbeing, analysis of recent educational policies reveals that the goal of addressing young people's wellbeing exists in a contradictory relationship with the (main) goal of education which is to create a close fit between education and the needs of new and emerging economies.

In the following section I describe research on young people's lives as a reference point for considering the relevance of current policy directions. The idea that schools play a significant role in teaching young people how to 'become somebody' is not new (Wexler 1992). Recent research on young people's experiences of school, however, reinforces the importance of school in shaping who young people become (McLeod & Yates 2006, Smyth & McInerney 2007) and in assisting them to develop the cultural resources that enable them to thrive (regardless of their material resources). In arguing that the work that young people (must) do to make themselves (identity work) is connected to wellbeing, I highlight the role that education plays in shaping identities – and in enabling young people to 'become somebody well'. This discussion leads into a critical discussion of current educational policy directions. The article concludes that the current orientation of Australian education policy towards an instrumental, vocationalist model of learning does not result in a good fit with what young people need in order to learn how to live well.

Shaping identities in the mid 2000s

Young people face the challenge of making their lives in the new social and political contexts and urban-based economies (which also impact on rural and regional areas). They are doing this against the backdrop of a decline in the stability of social structures such as family, work and social security and a loosening of the links between structures such as education and employment. Changes in labour markets, in the relationship between education and employment and in workplace relations and in the actions of the state have altered the significance of the traditional markers of adult status and of traditional institutions in industrialised countries. There is evidence that young people negotiate these challenges actively and positively, and as they do so, they craft adult identities that differ from previous generations, form new social relationships and make new uses of formal and informal education (Furlong & Cartmel 1997, Wyn & Woodman 2006, Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2001, Mizen 2004).

As young people negotiate their own trajectories in the spaces between policies, institutions and labour markets, they actively construct identities (Kelly 2006, White & Wyn 2008). This identity work is framed by neo-liberal discourses of responsibility and entrepreneurialism. Longitudinal research on young Victorians has identified new narratives of life amongst young people (Dwyer et al. 2005). A key element of these narratives is the way in which young people talk about their lives as a project for which they have the responsibility to monitor, review and shape. Employment is a journey and process rather than a destination. Young people develop narratives of life that enable them to 'story' the uncertainty and personal struggle to make a life (Wierenga 1999), a key element of which is the capacity to be reflexive, to be able to stand outside of one's self and reflect on one's place in the larger picture.

In other words, flexible narratives are a key element in the identities that young people must forge. Flexible narratives are especially relevant to patterns of employment and unemployment in the service sector of urban economies in which poverty, insecurity and hybrid forms of existence between employment and unemployment are a central part of the context from which young people construct their 'choices' in life (Ball et al. 2000). These narratives have been described as reflecting the emergence of an 'entrepreneurial Self' as a defining feature of a new generation of young people, the nature of which young people are engaged in shaping 'reflexively' and 'endlessly' throughout their life (Kelly 2006). Others have described how these narratives are the product of 'choice biographies' (du Bois Reymond 1998).

The evidence from a number of longitudinal studies reinforces the significance of the reflexive, self-managing entrepreneurial self and the narratives that individuals use to sustain this production (McLeod & Yates 2006, Dwyer & Wyn 2004, Wyn & Woodman 2006). These studies also reveal that some narratives are more effective than others in locating the narrator within a meaningful storyline in which the thread of past, present and future achieve a workable biography (Wyn 2007). While access to material and cultural resources is an important feature, it is not the only element in the construction of the behaviours and dispositions that appear to be enabling for young people. In the following discussion I highlight two related elements that are implicated in the emergence of new identities and narratives: the significance of social relationships and responsibility. Both have implications for young people's wellbeing.

Social relationships

In the face of unreliable and unstable social institutions, forging effective and reliable personal relationships represents an important investment. Social relationships are a significant resource. Many young people accept that being adult will not necessarily mean living within a nuclear family and, even with the incentive of a government baby bonus, many will never become biological parents. High rates of family breakdown mean that increasingly, adults will raise children that are not their biological children (Weston, Stanton, Qu & Soriano 2001). There has been a rise in the proportion of young people living in group households with predominantly same-age people, in multi-generational households with parents and siblings and on their own (ABS 2005). This increased diversity in household and family life, combined with the uncertainty and precarity of the labour market, heightens the need for individuals themselves to create and maintain meaningful, long-term, personal relationships that would once have been supported by more stable family, community and employment structures (White & Wyn 2008).

The importance of young people's relationships is reflected in the way they mobilise resources and actively draw on sources of information. In her study of young people's transitions in a Tasmanian rural community Wierenga (2008) provides a vivid account of the way in which the quality of social relationships, and especially trust, mediates the extent to which young people use information and support. Her analysis of the construction of narratives that involved positive and sustainable story-lines stretching across past, present and future demonstrates how social relationships with key others are an essential component in the development of 'cultural capital'. While educationalists have drawn extensively on the idea of cultural capital as a key element in socially just education, this has often been linked to the intellectual rigour of educational curricula, ignoring the role of social relationships within schools and in the community in enabling young people to access and mobilize cultural resources, and ignoring the significance of learning to understand and manage personal relationships as a resource for their future.

Responsibility and choice

Despite the portrayals of young people in the popular media as irresponsible (Wyn 2005) and in academic discourse as engaged in faulty transitions (Wyn 2004), the evidence suggests that young people accept a high level of responsibility for their decisions and choices (Dwyer et al. 2005). Faced with the necessity of making decisions about all aspects of their lives, including health and wellbeing, relationships, education and employment, most are negotiating uncertainty and change successfully. The necessity for individuals to take personal responsibility for shaping their own outcomes and the need to make choices about new options that have few points of comparison with the lives of earlier generations has been described as a process of individualization (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002). This process, including the increased acceptance of personal responsibility amongst young people has been noted in other Western countries including the U.K and Scandinavia (Ball, Maguire & Macrae 2000, Aapola & Ketokivi 2005).

Responsibility and choice have two implications for young people's wellbeing. One is that bearing the risks of choice is personally stressful. The second is that health is one of the areas for which young people are increasingly required to have personal responsibility. They are interested to know more about how to be well because they are increasingly positioned by neo-liberal policies, as being required to manage and perform good health.

The relationship between these dimensions of identity work and education are highlighted when we consider the ways in which young people use formal (and informal) education. This consideration raises further questions about what is taught in school and how it is taught.

Uses of formal and informal education

Completing secondary education has become normative for becoming an adult (Dwyer & Wyn 2001). Formal learning is seen as a mechanism through which young people can gain some control over their (future) lives and education is valued pragmatically because of the necessity for educational credentials. Yet, learning in formal settings is often poorly related to settings outside of educational institutions (Stokes & Wyn 2007). Learning in non-formal settings (for example, paid work in workplaces, in leisure pursuits, engaging in cultural activities and in voluntary work) is valued by young people because it equips them to engage with immediate issues and rehearses the exercise of choice and decision-making (Stokes, Wierenga & Wyn 2004).

Young people see leisure as contributing to mental and physical health and as enhancing the personal resources on which they can draw. In an age of uncertainty, in order to survive young people need to have the capacity to understand the options that they have before them and to have the skills to make reasonable choices. Educators are increasingly critical of schooling that fails to prepare young people for this complexity. For example, Higgins and Nairn's (2006, p. 218) study of New Zealand students in the final years of secondary school found that they were unprepared for the realities of the situation they would face:

> … most seem to have adopted one of the key assumptions present in the policy model and in the skill-deficit discourse that informs it; namely, the conflation of qualifications with labour market power. Most were optimistic that they would achieve whatever qualifications they sought, and that employment would be forthcoming after this.

Young people's use of education draws attention to the ways in which young people themselves are contributing to changes in our understandings of learning. As Lingard argues, the meanings and practices of pedagogies have been broadened and relocated within institutional (and informal) arrangements well beyond the traditionally educational (Lingard 2005, p. 167). The formal and informal uses that young people make of education underline the shift to a 'totally pedagogised society' in which all stages of life require education and educating and in which all areas of life are seen as learning opportunities (Bernstein 2001, cited in Lingard 2005, p. 167). Hence, while education is being constrained and narrowed in educational polices, its uses by young people pushes towards a deepening and broadening of learning across formal and informal settings.

Given the focus that young people themselves (must) place on establishing positive social relationships, on coping with uncertainty and on managing their physical and mental health, issues, skills and capacities that are located within the broad category of 'wellbeing' are of central significance to education for the 21st Century. In the next section, I argue that there is a disjuncture between this development and the direction of current educational policies which place an overwhelming emphasis on vocational and economic outcomes.

Educational policies

Australian approaches to education policy and curriculum design tend to follow the direction set by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), (OECD 1996, Delors 1996, OECD 2001). The policy statements produced by the OECD explicitly acknowledge the rapidly changing nature of social, economic and political life in the post-industrial world as the context for shaping formal education systems. Ideas about the nature and content of formal education are dominated by the assumption that formal education is first and foremost a mechanism for the production of young people who have the appropriate skills and dispositions to serve the economy. These statements point out that changing from a traditional industrial base into knowledge-based economies requires workers with high levels of post-secondary and increasingly tertiary education who will engage in re-skilling, returning regularly to formal education throughout their working lives in order to stay competitive within labour markets that continuously require new sets of skills (OECD 1996).

Some reports also acknowledge that new forms of social inequality are emerging as a result of these economic changes and that social groups that do not use education effectively are increasingly marginalised from participation in economic activity (OECD 2001). An Australian report by the Department of Education, Science and

Training (Watson 2003) argues that individuals who are not lifelong learners will suffer economic and social exclusion within this emerging economy. This report also argues that Australia as a nation will suffer economic exclusion unless it develops a knowledge-based economy, and becomes primarily a learning society. Hence, investment in education and training is seen as a key to developing human and social capital as a basis for sustaining economic growth and international competitiveness as well as social inclusion and active citizenship.

A common response to these ideas has been to focus on vocational education and training for young people in the post-compulsory years (for example, OECD 2004, Working Group on 14-19 Reform 2004). In Australia, state education departments have also relied on these frameworks to provide a rationale for the development of vocational education programs which prepare young people to work with new technologies and enterprises to ensure Australia's competitiveness in an increasingly global market. Te Riele and Crump (2003) illustrate how educational policies in New South Wales in the 1990s were framed by these assumptions. In Victoria, the Department of Education and Training (2002, p. 18) has similarly focused on 'remaking the Victorian education and training system so that it matches the new economic environment we face'. This policy direction emphasises the importance of all students acquiring 'knowledge and skills' for an 'innovation economy'. While the focus is on using formal education to serve the needs of the economy, the report also offers a perspective on the benefits of this approach for young people (referred to as workers), because 'high levels of education make it easier for workers to move into new industries and new work' (Department of Education and Training 2002, p. 18).

A subsequent Victorian government report, *Maintaining the Advantage: Skilled Victorians* (Department of Education and Training 2006, p. 5) outlines new initiatives and funding to promote 'better skills and more of them, to better function in an economy increasingly driven by innovation' through vocationally-oriented education. In the introduction to this document, the then Premier of Victoria, Mr. Bracks, notes that Victorians need to be 'healthy and smart' and asserts that this will be achieved through ensuring that there are 'more skilled people to support its skill-based economy' and through ensuring that the Victorians have 'access to the health services…they need to reach their full potential' (2006, p. 1). Neither health nor wellbeing, however, receives further mention in the document.

The Victorian Government's *Blueprint for Government Schools* (Department of Education and Training 2003) also acknowledges the dual role of education (following the OECD) in fostering skills for economic prosperity and ensuring social health and cohesion (p. 7). The *Blueprint* describes the processes for managing and administering a 'relentless focus on improving … student learning' in Victorian public schools (p. 23).

This document outlines management principles to achieve the utilitarian goals of improving standards of literacy and numeracy, increasing the levels of participation in education to the completion of secondary school to 'near universal' levels and increasing levels of adult education. The *Blueprint* sets out a process of measurement and impression management which will set in place a culture of performance in schools, through which educational practices are oriented towards a measurable end product. But many educators argue that this process thins out educational knowledge, through its emphasis on outcomes measures and accountabilities linked to standardised testing, competitiveness, choice and markets (Lingard 2005).

Another Victorian Government policy document, *Social Competence: A Whole School Approach to Linking Learning and Wellbeing* (Department of Education and Training 2002) takes up the issue of young people's wellbeing. The Social Competencies initiative was explicitly developed to play a subordinate role to the 'central goal that all students will leave school literate, numerate, socially competent and will progress to further education and employment' (back cover). Although wellbeing is mentioned in the title of the document, this term only re-surfaces briefly, as a by-product of 'how well people cope with relationships in everyday life' (p.10). Instead of developing a concept of wellbeing, the document focuses on the goal of building human and social capital through the development of eight social competencies (p. 11). These competencies would, it is argued, produce competent workers for the 21st Century, but would be less likely to enhance social cohesion. The competencies focus on the individual development of students, including self-management, responsible decision-making skills, flexible coping skills, social problem-solving and conflict resolution, as well as a range of social perception and communication skills (p. 8). In a process that emphasises 'difference' rather than social cohesion, (Dei 1999), students are taught to 'bond' through making connections with people who are 'similar to oneself' and 'bridge' through 'making connections' with people who they feel are 'different' (Department of Education and Training 2002, p. 11).

This brief analysis of Victorian education policy illustrates how formal education is framed within an economic model of learning. The dominance of the economic goal of formal education means that children and young people are positioned first and foremost as instruments for economic development. From a policy perspective, their wellbeing is relevant only to the extent that workers need to be healthy in order for the economy to grow. The contribution of formal education to the social health and physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of young people therefore is marginal to the primary economic goal of developing young people's human capital in such a way that it matches the needs of the economy.

The vocational and economistic framing of education promoted through current educational policies from the OECD through to national and state policies (Lingard 2005, Ball 2004, Hartley 2003, Ranson 2003) tends to marginalise approaches to learning that promote wellbeing. In this section I discuss how the marginalising processes creates tensions between (a) inclusive, egalitarian educational processes versus exclusive processes; and, (b) approaches to learning which promote students as producers of knowledge versus those that position students as subjects of knowledge. This involves a consideration of what is taught to young people, how it is taught and where responsibility for learning about wellbeing lies.

What is taught to young people

Many educational researchers have pointed out that a disjuncture exists between the goals of education as offering all young people the opportunities to learn and the reality of hierarchies of curricula and school knowledge that discriminate against young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Teese 2000, te Riele & Crump 2003). As Teese (2000) shows in his analysis of student performance in Victoria, school curricula tend to exacerbate class-based differences in the uses of education, producing unequal outcomes. Drawing on research on young people in the UK, Bathmaker (2005, p. 89) shows how vocational education curricula disadvantage students because 'different forms of vocational education and training are not only unequal in status compared with academic study, but they are not of equal status amongst themselves', just as academic school curricula in Australia are unequal in terms of their value in educational markets. Te Riele and Crump's analysis of post-compulsory education in New South Wales reveals how a 'policy preoccupation with the benefits of education for economic growth has led to a narrowed vision of the purposes of education' (te Riele & Crump 2003, p.68) and shifted the responsibility for managing equity in outcomes onto individuals. Their analysis highlights the ways in which students and their families struggle to manage the complexities of different educational 'opportunity structures' which, through their 'sifting and sorting' roles, create ongoing inequalities. Hence, the goal of education as a force for social cohesion is seriously compromised by its embeddedness in both traditional and new processes of inequality.

The policy focus on instrumental academic and vocational preoccupations relegates individual and social wellbeing to the margins of formal education. Where wellbeing is admitted, it is generally briefly, framed in terms of individuals' responsibility to ensure they do not compromise their fitness for the workforce, to avoid being 'at risk' and to reduce the economic costs of the 'health burden' (for example, education about contraception, the harms of drugs including alcohol, and education to instill healthy practices that will counter obesity and smoking), (Wright & Burrows 2004). Health becomes a medium for 'governmentality', that is, a way of ensuring that young people comply with policy directions.

How young people are taught

Curricula that are designed to build skills and dispositions for the economy are justified in policy documents through the goal of providing learning opportunities for individuals and their communities in a rapidly changing world. Lingard (2005, p. 170) identifies this as a significant disjunction in which 'old pedagogy' is, paradoxically, intended to meet the stated needs of knowledge economies for creative, entrepreneurial and reflexive workers. Here, Lingard is using the term 'pedagogy' to refer to the approach that teachers take to learning and his label 'old pedagogy' refers to the positioning of students as receivers of knowledge as opposed to constructors of knowledge (Lingard 2005).

These ideas are elaborated by Whitty (2002) who, referring to educational policies in the UK in the early 2000s, argues that the assumptions behind the drive to 'match' education to economic needs aligns with older, 'Fordist' ideas about the relationship between work and schooling. The following description of UK educational policy by Walsh, makes this point emphatically:

> Not for the first time modernization turns out to be a journey back to the future, to what used to be known as the 'three Rs': to an imagined, more deferential time, long before the thrusting noisy era of comprehensive reform, to a time when schooling was a basic technical process to be made available to the many for the purpose of making them better able to take their place as workers in an increasingly industrial society (Walsh 2006, p. 113).

These approaches to learning are based on a utilitarian concept of education which focuses on the acquisition of centrally determined and standardised skills and competencies. These skills and competencies are measured as 'outcomes' and are managed through the imposition of forms of accountability that eventually constitute the system (Ranson 2003). Lingard argues that this approach has created an educational system in which learning is 'whole-class focused, teacher-directed and thinned out, neglecting creativity and problem-solving capacities' (Lingard 2005, p.170). Drawing on the experience of the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (Lingard et al. 2001), Lingard describes the implications of the new instrumentalism for social justice. The study revealed that in many schools there was an absence of intellectual demand, a failure to connect with students' lives and communities and a failure to value difference (Lingard 2005 p.179). Students from disadvantaged backgrounds were the least likely to benefit from narrow approaches to learning.

Whose responsibility

While individual teachers play a very significant role in promoting wellbeing (often through a service ethic and altruism), inter-sectoral collaboration has been a key element in school programs that aim to address young people's health and wellbeing. This approach is informed by the acknowledgement that young people's health and wellbeing is not simply the responsibility of schools. For example, in Australia, the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) movement has popularized the benefits of a whole of school approach to the promotion of health amongst children, young people and teachers (Rissel & Rowling 2000). The HPS approach has been especially important in providing a framework for managing partnerships between departments of education and departments of health and human services with the common goal of increasing the capacity of schools to promote health, resulting in a wide range of programs, including *MindMatters* (a mental health promotion program) and drug education programs based in state education departments (Wyn et al. 2000). Indeed, the framework is regarded as one of the most effective ways of developing 'genuine partnerships between health and education sectors' (Stewart et al. 2000).

The HPS approach provides an 'umbrella' for the development of links between schools and health services and organisations including both federal and state health departments, justice, police, recreation, local government and community arts and drama groups and organisations such as the National Heart Foundation, the Anti-Cancer Foundation and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (Stokes & Mukherjee 2000). Research reveals, however, that these links between health agencies and schools are dogged by short-term, 'additional' funding allocations from departments of education and health. For example, Stokes and Mukherjee comment that HPS operates

> … within a climate of diminished resources, in which links were seen as important 'as long as someone else pays'. From a health service perspective, developing and maintaining links with school often are seen as 'additional' rather than as core business. Funding tends to be for short rather than the long-term strategies. An emerging difficulty for schools in Australia is a shift in practice to an increasingly commercial and user-pays principle to purchase many health education services and resources (p. 256).

The HPS approach foreshadowed subsequent developments to promote joined-up practice in the UK, where under New Labour policies, a 'multi-agency' approach has been promoted as a means for combating exclusion and marginalization. Both have in common the promotion of partnerships and collaborations between schools and external agencies in order to address social outcomes and individual and community wellbeing.

Critiques of the UK models of multi-agency partnerships point out that the politics of partnerships and of collaboration need to be acknowledged, including the powerful economic discourses that frame formal education and the power relationships within partnerships (Tett, Crowther & O'Hara 2003). From this point of view, health, wellbeing and social inclusion are not marginal because the curriculum is 'crowded'; they are marginal because not all elements have equal value. The literature reveals a deep pessimism about the potential for initiatives that aim to address social issues (Harris 2005, Tett et al. 2003). Hence while inter-sectoral collaboration offers the prospect of innovative practice to enhance young people's wellbeing, it is also vulnerable because ownership across partnerships is ambiguous and commitment is contingent on 'additional' rather than core funds. Inter-sectoral programs are often seen as a marginal and short-term by the collaborating organisations.

Conclusion

To return to the young people whose views initiated this discussion, it is clear that there is a gap between the learning needs of young people and the expectations that frame government policies. As young people negotiate new economies and social realities their experiences support the view that they would benefit from enriched pedagogies that are learner-focused and that foster creativity and problem-solving. Yet, current education policy pushes towards a restricted form of education which fails to acknowledge what many young people, teachers and parents understand – that learning is fundamentally important in assisting young people to choose and achieve those things they value and in enhancing individual and community wellbeing. Learning for life is based on pedagogies of 'communities of learners' involving teachers, students and where possible, their communities in partnerships in constructing learning activities and goals.

The dominance of economistic approaches to education has the power to both co-opt and subvert the broader social goals of initiatives and to narrow the meaning of both health and wellbeing. Many of the initiatives that are implemented under the broad umbrella of health promotion in schools relate more closely to ensuring compliance with government agendas than with promoting wellbeing (St Leger & Nutbeam 2000). In an increasingly litigious context, anti-bullying, the promotion of healthy canteen food and sun protection programs have come to have a risk-management element. Health promotion programs in schools actively promote the acceptance of individual responsibility for broad social health issues, such as obesity, lack of physical activity and anxiety disorders (Wright & Burrows 2004) and of wellbeing as the exercise of self-responsible agency (Rose 1999, Sointu 2005). Others have pointed out that the encouragement of schools to enter 'partnerships' is linked to a 'marketisation agenda' in which partnerships between schools and between schools and other agencies are seen as offering educational consumers wider choice (Evans et al. 2005).

What is at stake here is a struggle between different pedagogies, in which the rhetoric of ‘changing education for changing times’ masks a narrow, utilitarian approach to educational curricula that is more in step with Australia’s industrial and manufacturing past than its post-industrial present and its future.

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