SOCIAL JUSTICE ON THE EDGE: TEACHING FOR CITIZENSHIP IN LOW SOCIOECONOMIC SCHOOLS

Rosalyn Black
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

Reflecting a trend that is long established in the United Kingdom, Australian education policy increasingly charges schools with fostering ‘active’ or ‘practical’ citizens who have the will and capacity to contribute to the democratic project of social justice. This policy prescription also resonates with some teachers’ commitment to pedagogical practices that position young people as active or even ‘activist’ citizens capable of engineering a more just society. Especially in low socioeconomic school contexts, however, the pursuit of such practices may be subject to competing or conflicting education discourses and priorities. This paper considers the findings of a recent study of two schools located in low socioeconomic peri-urban communities where teachers have introduced pedagogies of active citizenship. It draws on established ideas of risk as well as on the emerging scholarship of emotional geography to discuss what motivates, enables, authorises and constrains such teachers’ educational work on the edges of schooling.