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Alison Wrench and Robyne Garrett

School of Education, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

ABSTRACT
In developed economies, such as Australia, schooling is heavily impacted by neo-liberal and neo-conservative agendas. Policies suggest a homogeneity in students that fails to reflect regional contexts of inequality. For the new Australian Curriculum, which includes Health and Physical Education (AC: HPE), this logic prioritises consistency in content and standards for students no matter location or socio-economic circumstances. Little is known about the ‘lived’ realities of such aspirations as they relate to teaching students from disadvantaged regions. This paper reports on practitioner inquiry into a redesigned dance unit, as part of a broader investigation into the implementation of AC: HPE with disadvantaged students. We draw on literature around student engagement and Nancy Fraser’s theorisation of justice to explore the pedagogical redesign. We conclude in arguing that enhanced learning outcomes for disadvantaged students are dependent upon rich and contextualised pedagogical practices.

KEYWORDS
Engagement; justice; practitioner inquiry; dance in HPE

Introduction
In developed political economies, such as Australia, schooling is heavily impacted by neo-liberal and neo-conservative agendas (Apple, 2004; Connell, 2013). Consequences include prescribed curriculum and reductive forms of teaching (Edwards-Groves & Kemmis, 2016). Within the field of Health and Physical Education (HPE), this encompasses curricular and pedagogical focus on developing students who can take responsibility for bodies, health, and activity levels (Azzarito, Macdonald, Dagkas, & Fisette, 2016). Policies, exemplified by the new Australian Curriculum (AC) (Lingard & McGregor, 2014), also suggest student homogeneity and fail to reflect regional contexts of growing inequality evident in Australia and internationally (Lingard, 2013). Consistency in content and standards against which students can be measured regardless of location and socio-economic circumstances is the priority (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2016a).

Of concern is that such policies and practices of accountability are contributing to worsening educational disadvantage, including in HPE, experienced by marginalised students (Azzarito et al., 2016). Little is known about the ‘lived’ realities of these policies as they relate to teaching students from culturally complex and low socio-economic communities. In these contexts, students rely heavily on formal schooling for their educational resources (Hayes, Johnston, & King, 2009) including those around physical activity and health. As
HPE educators committed to critical pedagogies for HPE, we believe it is important to investigate justice outcomes of pedagogical practices in HPE. The broader research project from which this paper emerges investigated the implementation of the AC in schools serving students living in poverty. In this paper, we specifically report on a case study of pedagogical redesign, which aimed to engage disadvantaged students in dance and to enhance learning outcomes in HPE.

We first contextualise the undertaking before addressing theoretical perspectives around justice and engagement. An outline of the practitioner inquiry and pedagogical redesign of a dance unit follows. Data will be presented through themes of *Alienation and passive compliance*, *Dancing around discomfort*, and *Dancing with engagement*. We conclude by arguing that aspirations of AC: HPE as they relate to enhanced learning outcomes for disadvantaged students are dependent upon rich and contextualised pedagogical practices.

**Official knowledge, local knowledge, and HPE**

The acquisition of movement skills and concepts that enable students to confidently and competently participate in a range of physical activities is integral to AC: HPE (ACARA, 2016b). Argument is made for establishing the foundations of life-long participation in physical activity. Rhythmic and expressive activities, including dance, are identified as contributing to this aim as well as developing personal and social skills, plus critical and creative thinking (ACARA, 2016b).

When dance, associated knowledge, and skills, is legitimated through curriculum such as AC: HPE, it is recognised as official knowledge (Meshulam & Apple, 2014). This framing is neither neutral nor does it guarantee certainty in experiences, pedagogical practices, and student learning (Mattsson & Lundvall, 2013). Ball (1994) argues that policies, such as AC: HPE are struggled over in in local contexts. If we are to understand the generative nature and possibilities of these struggles we should ‘study the re-articulations that occur on this level to be able to map the creation of alternatives’ (Gandin & Apple, 2002, p. 100). These sentiments informed our investigation into the pedagogical redesign and practitioner inquiry presented in this paper.

We are particularly interested in the ways teachers work to align official curriculum such as AC: HPE with pedagogical practices founded in the cultural resources, and knowledge, students bring to schooling in their ‘virtual school bag’ (Thomson, 2002, p. 1). Our interest is founded on justice concerns for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. As such, we are informed by previous research collaborations conducted in schools located in the Northern suburbs of Adelaide, which is an area of intergenerational poverty and disadvantage (see Comber & Kamler, 2004; Hattam & Zipin, 2009; Wrench, Hammond, McCallum, & Price, 2013). Our work also enters into the discursive field of practitioner inquiry in HPE (see Bowes & Tinning, 2015; Casey, 2012; Garrett & Wrench, 2016; Goodyear, Casey, & Kirk, 2013).

**Justice and engagement**

**Justice**

In the field of education, the work of Fraser (1997, 2005, 2010) is commonly drawn upon in discussing justice (Luke, Woods, & Weir, 2013). Fraser (2010) argues that notions of
justice, premised on equal moral worth, require ‘social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life’ (p. 16). Justice outcomes are reliant on addressing barriers to parity in participation within three distinct yet intrinsically interrelated areas: recognition, redistribution, and representation (Fraser, 2005, 2010).

Recognition is concerned with cultural hierarchies (Fraser, 2005, 2010) framed by factors such as gender, class, race, and disability, which work against parity in participation. In relation to HPE consequences arise in relation to confronting and countering the dominance of particular movement forms, understandings of ability, and corporeality, which work to exclude students. Recognition is, hence, reliant on pedagogical practices that take into account differences framed by socio-economic status, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, special needs, and abilities (Luke et al., 2013).

Redistribution focuses on economic and material barriers to full and fair participation in social, civic, and economic life (Fraser, 2005, 2010). Redistributive justice involves pedagogies that are intellectually challenging, premised on high expectations, and provide access to educational goods and cultural capital (Lingard & Keddie, 2013). Implications arise for HPE educators to utilise pedagogies that incorporate rigour and high expectations as means for supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds in developing resources around health, physical activity, and concomitantly, long-term health outcomes.

Representation, as the political dimension of justice, frames who is included/excluded and warrants ‘just distribution and reciprocal recognition’ (Fraser, 2010, p. 17). Of significance are top-down approaches to policy development that ignore circumstances at the local level (Devine, 2015). Representative justice challenges HPE educators to adopt practices that connect to and validate knowledge founded in the life-worlds and perspectives of marginalised students (Lingard & Keddie, 2013). Implications arise in terms of designing curriculum and pedagogical practices that incorporate the ‘voices’, cultural knowledge, and viewpoints of these students. This is particularly significant in times marked by neo-liberal agendas when students and families from the most marginalised communities are disproportionally less likely to have their perspectives accounted for and recognised as legitimate (Fraser, 2010).

Whilst discourses of recognition, as these relate to identity, have been significant to critical research agendas in HPE, political, and economic barriers to parity in participation have not received the same attention (Devine, 2015; Evans & Davies, 2014). This paper seeks to make a contribution by addressing this imbalance. We are working from the premise that pedagogical practices that address discrimination, value diversity, and incorporate the perspectives of students from marginalised backgrounds represent movement towards justice (Keddie, 2012). However, we are also cognisant that practices are always situated within complex interrelationships of policy, institutional, and contextual factors (Kemmis, 2012). Our specific interest is the interplay of policy in the form of AC: HPE, one teacher’s pedagogical redesign within a regional context of entrenched disadvantage, and a school context framed by building student engagement.

**Engagement**

Engagement is a multifaceted concept incorporating affective (enthusiasm for learning), cognitive (using high-level strategies in deep learning), and behavioural (actively performing tasks) domains (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). It is understood as malleable
and spanning from liking and participating, to investing wholly in schooling as a meaningful endeavour (Fredricks et al., 2004; Munns, 2007). Student engagement is fundamental to addressing disengagement or alienation from schooling and low levels of student achievement (Fredricks et al., 2004). Moreover, deep and committed engagement to schooling is crucial to enhancing educational success amongst disadvantaged students (Munns & Sawyer, 2013). Student engagement also mediates the impact and sustainability of curricular and pedagogical reforms (Alvermann & Marshall, 2013), such as those discussed in this paper.

Munns (2007) together with Munns and Sawyer (2013) draw on longitudinal research conducted with teachers working with students living in poverty to distinguish between ‘compliance’ to low-level tasks and the development of ‘Engagement’ in the form of enduring relationships to education. They argue that the term ‘engagement’ should only be used when there is evidence of a balanced interplay of high cognitive, affective, and operative (or behavioural) dimensions. Implications arise for teachers in designing learning experiences that incorporate high cognitive demands, build strong affective connections, and actively engage students in their learning (Arthur & Hertzberg, 2013). Of significance here is building investments in schooling amongst students who have not commonly equated formal education with enhanced future outcomes (Munns & Sawyer, 2013).

To reiterate, a school-wide focus on engagement framed the context in which the practitioner inquiry featured in this paper was enacted. More specifically, the school was working with a model that identified a continuum of student rebellion, retreatism, passive compliance, strategic compliance, and engagement (Schlechty, 2002). Of these elements, passive compliance aligns with notions of low level compliance identified by Munns (2007) and Munns and Sawyer (2013). Attaining increased student engagement with schooling, as evident in behaviours that could be categorised as full engagement or Munns (2007) notion of enduring relationships with education was an aim of the school.

This research

Data presented in this paper were drawn from a case study incorporating critical practitioner inquiry by Kate, the HPE teacher in the primary school of a Reception-Year 12 school of over 1000 students. The school has one of the largest enrolments of Indigenous students in the metropolitan area in South Australia. Further to this, a high percentage of students live in poverty and increasing numbers are from culturally diverse backgrounds (Wrench et al., 2013). In terms of demographics, the student population is reflective of the northern region of Adelaide, which is characterised by high levels of intergenerational unemployment, entrenched poverty, and cultural diversity (Wrench et al., 2013).

Kate’s practitioner inquiry incorporated professional dialogue with the authors as critical friends. Both authors had a long-standing professional relationship with Kate, which facilitated her recruitment into the larger research project investigating the implementation of the AC. Semi-structured interviews or powerful conversations (Burgess, 1988) provided the key means of data collection. Conversations were conducted over nine months, and generated rich data founded on Kate’s perspectives and understandings. Preliminary and post-learning tasks and photographs provided additional data.
Critical practitioner inquiry recognises the centrality of practitioners to the research process and aims to improve practices, understandings of justice implications of these practices, and the situations where these practices are enacted (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Gilmore & McDermott, 2006; Kemmis, 2012). Kates’ perspectives and reflections about ‘the nature, conditions and consequences of [her] … practices’ (Kemmis, 2012, p. 890) are presented in this case study in an attempt to comprehend the ‘lived-ness’ and consequences of practices.

Cycles of practice and reflection were guided by four questions proposed by Smyth (2001): What do I do? (describing), What does this mean? (informing), How did it come to be like this? (confronting), and How might I do things differently? (reconstructing). Smyth’s questions challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about pedagogical practices and provoke practitioners to adopt an ‘ethic of discomfort’ and, hence, confront ‘being completely comfortable with [their] own certainties’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 127). Key to Kates’ critical practitioner inquiry was how these questions provided a means by which she could problematise and transform pedagogies, which had previously failed to engage male students in dance and promote high-level learning outcomes in HPE.

Analysis

A socially critical standpoint (Basit, 2010) was assumed whilst conducting the study, which involved considering Kate’s pedagogical practices within a justice framework. In adopting a critical case study design, the intention was to develop deep understandings about the pedagogical redesign as well as its relationship to student engagement and justice outcomes of the dance unit.

Data generated from conversations were read multiple times by the authors. Reading through an interpretative lens, attempts were made to identify key patterns (Patton, 2002), in relation to Fraser’s threefold framework for justice. Following independent reading the authors discussed understandings and interpretations and repeated the process for data relating to engagement. Smyth’s four questions were then used in identifying commonalities and, hence, sorting data into key themes. The sorted data were shared with Kate so as to establish authenticity in our representation of her practitioner inquiry and pedagogical redesign.

Kate’s reflections on Smyth’s (2001) first three questions focused attention on data captured through the theme of Alienation and passive compliance. Her attempts to address ‘what’ and ‘how’ she might do things differently were encapsulated through the theme of Dancing around discomfort. Data that focused on student learning and participation are presented through the theme of Dancing with engagement.

This inquiry was conducted with one teacher, hence, we make no claims for empirical generalisability, but present findings from this single case with the aim of expanding understandings (Gilmore & McDermott, 2006) for others working with students from less powerful social positions. In the next section, we present excerpts from Kate’s conversations and attempt to expound upon these through discussion and links to theoretical perspectives.

Alienation and passive compliance

Kate, in collaboration with both authors, engaged with Smyth’s (2001) questions to identify and clarify issues, contributing factors and possible action in the form of a pedagogical
redesign. In reflecting upon what was happening, and what this meant (Smyth, 2001), Kate identified the persistent disengagement of boys from dance as a significant issue. As is evident in the following quote, she drew on justice discourses of recognition to identify understandings her students brought to dance lessons. Kate also drew on discourses of redistribution in discussing the potential of dance to provide her students with access to broader educational and cultural resources:

It was my students’ and their families’ attitudes towards dance. They had a very negative outlook around dance and what it could bring to their child or their education. I wanted to open their minds to being more accepting of dance. A lot of the boys in this particular area, they see it as something that is just for girls, … that’s not going to lead to anything, or help with anything. I think if they can embrace this and see that it’s a good thing, … they might look forward to embracing other things they may never have thought of.

In considering why an aversion to dance developed across the primary years, Kate identified the influence of ‘significant others’, and dominant understandings about masculinity and dance. The authority of ‘significant others’ is evident in the following excerpt:

It started from a parent/teacher interview I had with a father … when I tried to speak to him about his son’s engagement in dance, had a very negative outlook, swore about it, and said that his son didn’t need to do that girly stuff. That really scared me, because … if that’s the way parents are thinking, then that’s the way the kids are going to be thinking. When I looked into it further, I saw that a lot of my boys were showing the same attitudes towards dance as that parent was.

This excerpt suggests that cultural resources contained in the ‘virtual school bags’ (Thomson, 2002) of some of Kate’s male students are informed by discourses of traditional gender arrangements and power relations, which reinforce patriarchal assumptions around appropriate activities for males and females.

Rather than constructing her students in deficit terms, Kate, as is evident in the following excerpt also considered how pedagogical practices she had relied upon had not been effective in breaking down barriers or fostering engagement:

Before I started teaching I was a classical ballet teacher, so my mentality about how to teach dance was very much in that structured context. You do exactly what the teacher says … When I first started to introduce dance here, I was still using those pre-conceived ideas. I had to open up my teaching.

Kate problematised her reliance on teacher-directed pedagogies, and positioning herself as key decision maker and controller in lessons. It must be remembered that pedagogies develop within practice traditions (Kemmis, 2012, p. 892, italics in original). We suggest that Kate’s practices have been shaped by instrumental ways of thinking associated with dance and physical education, which position learners as passive and teachers as experts (Tinning, 2010). She acknowledges that as a consequence students were, according to Schlechty’s (2002) model of engagement, operating between passive compliance and retreatism:

Passive Compliance, … a lot of students were just doing what I said to do. I could see they weren’t engaged, didn’t want to do it, but were because they know they have to do what the teacher says. I saw their facial expressions, their body language, … slumped, … just show that they don’t want to be there … They were not interested in moving to lesson, and, as soon as the bell went they were out.
Reflections about the links between her reliance on teacher-directed pedagogies and student disengagement prompted Kate to suggest that she needed to change how she taught and, hence, engage with a pedagogical redesign.

**Dancing with discomfort**

Prior to commencing the redesigned dance unit Kate implemented strategies intended to gain insights into students’ experiences, feelings, and understandings about dance. These strategies included, a *mind-map* where students shared feelings about dance and a *word-wall* where they recorded what they knew about dance. These activities provided insights into the specific resources and knowledge students were bringing to class (Thomson, 2002). As is evident in Figure 1, the *mind-map* revealed markedly negative feelings, such as *embarrassing, boring, unsafe, and hate*.

Whilst this strategy indicated the depths of some students’ discomfort or aversion to dance, it also threw up some surprises, including the word ‘Cool’, recorded, albeit, in small, upside down writing (see Figure 1). The *word-wall* provided an opportunity for students to share prior knowledge about dance forms, exemplified in ‘Jazz’, contexts such as ‘parties’, and understandings that ‘dance is for girls’.

A third strategy incorporated a picture association activity, whereby students recorded the first word that came to mind when they viewed particular dance images. Images of ballet dancers prompted responses such as ‘lame’, and ‘I never want to do this’. In contrast, hip-hop images gave indication of some positivity in association with dance. This is evident in the following responses; ‘Don’t mind it’, ‘I wanna do this’, ‘Yeahhhhh’. This revelation was significant and as Kate commented:

I knew from this exercise I needed to start with hip-hop as many students didn’t have the same preconceived ideas around this style of dance. This has to be my ‘in’ with the students. I needed to start engaging them with positive dance experiences.

In terms of the justice dimension of *recognition* these pedagogical strategies specifically highlighted the cultural resources of Kate’s male students (Lingard & Keddie, 2013). To incorporate students’ perspectives into her pedagogical and curriculum redesign represented an opportunity for Kate to also address *representative* justice. This was essential

*Figure 1*. Mind-map.
if she was to devise learning experiences that might provide meaningful opportunities to participate and overcome ‘barriers to learning’.

Smyth’s (2001) fourth question: How might I do things differently? (reconstructing) prompted Kate to consider alternative possibilities and specific pedagogical practices. These strategies were partially informed by experiences in running a hip-hop crew with boys in the middle and senior years of her Reception-12 school. As a consequence Kate was aware of possibilities for engaging male students through dance:

The biggest thing that changed the way I teach Dance was working with high school students at my school. You can’t go in like that with kids of that age, because they will just say, ‘No’, and not do it. The group I was running was not compulsory, so they had to really want to be there. I started opening up and learning a lot from them, and letting them take charge of choreography, and coming up with ideas and music, and that started to change the way I teach.

From this excerpt it is evident that Kate experienced a broader range of discursive practices around dance and adopted an ‘ethic of discomfort’ to engage with alternative pedagogical approaches. The excerpt also evinces the significance of justice discourses of representation to pedagogical practices adopted by Kate. Valuing student knowledge and input underpinned pedagogies of negotiation and giving students choices. A consequence was a shift in power relationships from teacher as controller/director to teacher as facilitator. Of importance was how Kate might use and develop these strategies to address the aversion to dance expressed by male primary school students.

**Dancing with engagement**

Kate’s pedagogical redesign initially centred on hip-hop, but also incorporated a range of contextualised pedagogical strategies. These included using male role models, peer and cross-age tutoring, technology in designing and performing routines, and relinquishing the position of teacher as sole decision maker.

A key strategy in the early stages was providing multiple opportunities for her students to work with and relate to positive male role models. These opportunities included a demonstration by a visiting all male secondary dance crew. Kate was able to draw on the contextual support provided by her Principal to bring this into fruition.

Our Principal used to be at XXXX High, … they have a group of year 12 boys who are doing Dance as a subject. … he was instrumental in getting them here to perform for my students. It wasn’t just about role models from within the school, but also the wider community.

She also utilised connections with the hip-hop crew in the middle and senior years of her Reception-12 school whereby they performed and worked with her students.

I used those boys from the high school; they performed and I used the main guy, Leroy … and he’s very good, has leadership, … developed his skills by himself … that’s something my boys really engaged with. It’s being able to see someone at our school who they perceive as being cool, one of the ‘in crowd’, and he is dancing.

Cross-age interactions were further reinforced by participation in lessons by a male pre-service teacher who was completing a practicum with Kate. We suggest that students were exposed to a wider range of discourses of gender and dance and perhaps contextual conditions for supporting altered perspectives. Given the information provided by students
through the mind-map, word-wall, and picture association tasks, participation in hip-hop and working with older males also carried a potential to activate motivation and positive affective engagement as identified by Munns (2007), as well as Munns and Sawyer (2013).

Of significance with regards to engagement and justice implications of schooling are learning experiences that also incorporate high cognitive and high operative demands (Arthur & Hertzberg, 2013). Kate’s pedagogical redesign and enacted learning experiences give evidence of a determination to build knowledge and skills as well as encouraging students to be active in their learning. Specifically, as described in the following excerpt, Kate extended the peer teaching strategy, whereby her year 5/6 students were given opportunities to teach younger students:

I then got younger students to work with the students that I was working with, so they could be role models. So my year 5s then became role models for my reception and year 1s.

In terms of justice discourses of redistribution and representation this strategy also presented possibilities for students to access and use educational resources as well as understand themselves as knowledgeable and responsible. For Kate, ‘it gave them a chance to be the older people that were really good, and people could be impressed by them’.

Kate also reflected upon other ways she might bring students’ cultural resources into the official curriculum as means for enhancing participation, engagement, and extending learning. One strategy involved utilising and developing, in an educative manner, students’ connectedness to mobile technology and devices.

My kids are all about mobile phones, apps … So it’s about engaging them in that because that’s what they enjoy, but also teaching them a positive way to use that technology so it doesn’t always have to be about just being on Facebook.

Kate attempted to progress student learning beyond using mobile technology for accessing social media to using Apps, which assisted them in sequencing movements to music as well as building quality in movement and timing. This in itself provided positive reinforcement and built a sense of achievement in dance.

‘Just Dance’ … it automatically puts movements together to music … I took four small videos of them doing a simple movement, and the App automatically put it to music, and I said, Look, you’re dancing; … I can show you straight away on that screen, you’re dancing.

Building on this experience Kate introduced her students to Apps which supported them in making short film clips of their dances. A key aspect of this learning experience, as outlined in the following excerpt, was presenting students with the challenge of locating music that they liked and wanted to work with but which also met prescribed criteria in relation to language, violence, and sexual references:

The one we used most was one where we make film clips, and that was really engaging for the kids because they got to find music they wanted to use, … they had to prove to me that it didn’t have any sexual references or bad language Our school doesn’t allow them to have music that says the word sexy and things like that, so they knew what couldn’t be in there.

These learning experiences incorporated the cognitive, affective, and operative domains in relation to student engagement (Munns, 2007). The cognitive demands included locating appropriate music for creating a dance routine and also meeting key language criteria. Connections to the affective domain were evident in students completing the task in
their own time in advance of lessons. The task also incorporated the operative domain in that students were actively engaged in their own learning. This was possible because Kate recognised and incorporated into the curriculum skills and knowledge established in students’ life-worlds around music and mobile technology devices.

The majority of them had it before lessons, like we spoke about what we were going to be doing next lesson, and the majority of them already knew what song they were doing by the time they came to the next lesson.

Kate drew on student’s interests and life-world knowledge in multiple ways to progress learning and application of this learning. The following excerpt exemplifies utilising engagement with sport to develop capacities to choreograph movement plus respond to rhythm and beat.

We did a choreography lesson, where I gave all the boys a basketball. I know how much they love sport, so used both together. I gave them a few simple dance steps, you could do with a basketball, bringing in, you know, beat, rhythm … . I sent them away and they had to work out on ways they could use the basketball as part of dance.

Collectively these practices exemplify the significance of justice notions of recognition as these intersect with representation. This is in terms of valuing students’ knowledge and life-world experiences to incorporate these resources into official curriculum offerings as well as attempting to develop students’ skills in educative ways, which engage them in schooling and enhance learning outcomes. In progressing student learning and cognitive demands, Kate introduced dance terminology and broader movement concepts.

Concepts of dance that you often wouldn’t be using until you were quite far advanced, … starting to use terminology that I wanted them to use, and the concepts that I wanted them to understand, so we don’t have to use the basketballs anymore.

Further to this, and in accord with interrelated discourse of redistribution and representation, Kate established that it was necessary to provide learning experiences in dance beyond hip-hop.

We couldn’t just leave it at hip-hop because that … just engaged them in what they already liked. So I started by finding cultural dance clips … modern styles of cultural dance. We looked at how it looks different in different countries, but still in that modern sense.

Kate’s disruption of a taken-for-granted script line, described in the following excerpt, whereby she was the expert and her students were positioned as passive receivers of her knowledge also provides indication of justice discourses.

It was definitely engaging and having them pick music and come up with the choreography themselves, and have their own ideas and expression in it. I’m not the expert anymore, I’m not the one that’s going to tell them what to do. I’m just going to maybe help … and keep it going, but it’s … [students’] ideas that are coming through.

Here, we suggest an interplay of justice discourses of recognition, redistribution, and representation is significant. In recognising and drawing on students’ cultural resources, Kate demonstrates a willingness and commitment to legitimise students’ knowledge and input, to extend capabilities in meaningful ways, and support attainment of enhanced learning outcomes.
Kate, however, acknowledged that adopting such strategies and, hence, an ‘ethic of discomfort’ is, as described in the following excerpt, ‘scary’:

To give them control was difficult … you think as a teacher you have to have some level of control over the students … I didn’t end up losing … control over them, … , we just became like co-workers almost, in that sense, … I was there to drive the lessons and get them moving in particular ways that I wanted them to, but they were contributing just as much as me, in terms of the context of what was happening in there.

In adopting practices that incorporated a shift in power relations Kate was no longer the only decision maker regarding content and learning. However, her reflections on teacher control give evidence of the significance of practice traditions of education more broadly (Kemmis, 2012) in framing teachers’ pedagogical practices.

**Dancing, engagement, and learning**

Kemmis (2012) reminds us of the importance of practitioner inquiry in providing understandings about practice and its consequences, including in relation to transformation and justice imperatives. The significance of this is exemplified in data collected by Kate across all stages of the redesigned dance unit. For instance, when she repeated the word-wall exercise regarding knowledge about dance (see Figure 2) a transformation in affective engagement was evident in positive language, such as fun, energetic, and amazing used in association with dance.

Further evidence noted by Kate, as described in the following excerpt, involved the affective and operative domains of engagement:

To me the biggest thing was the way the kids came into my lessons. They didn’t want to leave, they wanted to finish the exercise they were doing, they wanted to get there early, they wanted to be a part of it, wanted to talk to me about it outside of school. … his showed me they were self-motivated. They were no longer needing me to make them do it, and they weren’t doing it because I told them to, they were doing it because they felt it was important, and wanted to do it. It was all coming from self, rather than from teacher. That was for me seeing them move up those levels of engagement.

In analysing this information, Kate reflected upon overall student engagement in the dance unit and felt that, according to Schlechty’s (2002) model of engagement, many had moved into higher levels.

![Figure 2. Word-wall.](image-url)
There definitely is transformation … They’re engaged, and thinking in a different way. It’s opened their minds to trying something new, whether it be dance of something else.

Whilst we cannot argue that Kate achieved what Munns and Sawyer (2013) refer to as ‘Engagement’ in the form of enduring and rewarding relationships to education, evidence of connection to dance beyond the PE lesson was achieved.

Our school has a talent competition, … a lot of those boys tried out, so they will be performing in front of a huge crowd. We’ve also got the end of year school concert, where they’ll be performing in front of the whole primary school and all the parents.

To reiterate, Munns and Sawyer (2103) argue that the term ‘engagement’ should only be used when there is evidence of a balanced interplay of high cognitive, affective, and operative (behavioural) dimensions. Given the excerpts above and that which follows we suggest that the interplay of these dimensions is evident throughout the redesigned unit and did contribute to student learning identified by Kate.

They were listening to lyrics and responding as well, and you saw them dance to the different speeds and tempos in the song. So when the song slowed down, the boys’ movements slowed down, they changed the way they moved.

In many respects, Kate’s students also demonstrated performance capacities identified in the Year 5 and Year 6 Achievement Standards for AC: HPE. This is specifically in terms of ‘solving movement challenges’ and applying ‘elements of movement when composing and performing movement sequences’. They also applied General Capabilities in relation to ITC, Personal and Social Capability plus Critical and Creative Thinking (ACARA, 2016b).

**Concluding thoughts**

In this paper, we have presented a single case study of critical practitioner inquiry into a redesigned primary school dance unit. Our work was informed by understandings that critical practitioner inquiry can provide deep insights into understandings and experiences of the ‘lived-ness’ of practice and its consequences (Kemmis, 2012). Of significance were insights into transformative possibilities around pedagogical practices, engagement, and enhanced learning outcomes in dance and HPE.

The context of the investigation into AC: HPE implementation, pedagogical redesign, and practitioner inquiry was a Reception-12 school located in a region of high socio-economic disadvantage in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. A focus on student engagement represented a contextual focus of this school, and provided a framing for the practitioner inquiry. We drew on the work of Munns (2007) and Munns and Sawyer (2013) in exploring the significance of affective, cognitive, and operative engagement for enhanced educational outcomes for students experiencing high socio-economic disadvantage. Our work was also informed by Fraser’s (2010) theorisation of justice within three distinct yet interrelated areas: recognition, redistribution, and representation.

In terms of justice, our discussion of pedagogical practices represented an attempt to move beyond a singular focus on identity or recognition (Evans & Davies, 2014) to incorporate discourses of redistribution and representation. Pedagogies founded in discourses of recognition, provided Kate with insights into the cultural resources and knowledge students were bringing to lessons and informed her pedagogical redesign. Of consequence,
however, was the interplay of discourses of recognition and representation, whereby the cultural resources of Kate’s students were given legitimacy within official curriculum. Specifically, these resources informed the initial unit focus of hip-hop, and pedagogical practices such as using male role models, peer teaching, and broadening mobile technology expertise.

An interplay of discourses of redistribution and representation underpinned Kate’s commitment and attempts to enhance student engagement and access to high-level educational capital. This was evident in strategies to progress student learning and performances beyond hip-hop to incorporate broader dance concepts, choreography, and other dance forms.

The reshaping of classroom arrangements and power relations gives further indication of the significance of the interrelatedness of justice discourses of recognition, redistribution, and representation. Kate’s pedagogical redesign incorporated a transformation from teacher as the expert who made all the decisions for reluctant, passive participants to teacher and students as co-participants and co-creators of knowledge. In terms of justice, student ‘voice’ and input were validated and informed learning experiences, which incorporated high levels of affective, cognitive, and operative demands.

At another level, Kate’s practitioner inquiry revealed that contextualised pedagogical practices are integral to bringing curriculum, such as AC: HPE, to life for students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Rich learning tasks were connected to student lifeworlds, extended boundaries, and enhanced engagement. In relation to engagement, Kate’s pedagogical practices incorporated an interrelationship of what Munns and Sawyer (2013) refer to as affective (enjoyment and motivation), cognitive (design, create, peer teach, and perform), and operative demands (beyond classroom engagement in identifying music, Apps). A direct consequence was evidence of student learning and performance of their learning in alignment with Year 5 and Year 6 Achievement Standards and General Capabilities in AC: HPE.

We reiterate that Kate’s practitioner inquiry is a single case study and, hence, we do not make claims of empirical generalisability. We do, however, make an argument for critical practitioner inquiry as a means for providing insights into deep and generative conceptions of teaching HPE. As this case study has demonstrated, critical practitioner inquiry can reveal nuances associated with enacting policy such as AC: HPE in complex schools contexts associated with students experiencing high socio-economic disadvantage. Pedagogical practices, such as those enacted by Kate can make a difference for these students, however, they involve teachers taking risks and operating with an ‘ethic of discomfort’ (Foucault, 2007).

Notes
1. Virtual school bag – cultural skills and dispositions that are valued by students in spaces outside of school, and which they carry with them into schooling (Thomson, 2002).
2. Munns (2007) along with Munns and Sawyer (2013) differentiate between small e engagement as incorporating high levels of affective, cognitive and operational dimensions and big E engagement which they refer to as enduring positive relationships to education.
3. Reception is the first year of formal schooling and Year 12 the final year in South Australia.

Notes on contributors
Alison Wrench, Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer in health and physical education in the School of Education at the University of South Australia. Her research interests include socially critical
pedagogies, identity work, and gender issues related to health and physical education and physical activity more generally. Recent research projects include critical practitioner inquiry into pedagogical redesign for enhanced engagement and educational outcomes for marginalised students. This work builds on previous investigations of interrelationships between teacher subjectivities, socio-critical orientations, and body-based pedagogical practices.

Robyne Garrett, Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer in physical education, dance, and teaching methodologies in the School of Education at the University of South Australia. Her research interests include gender, creative and body-based pedagogies, dance, and whiteness. Current projects include creative and body-based approaches to maths, socially just pedagogies for disadvantaged students, and whiteness investigations of curriculum. Her research methodologies include narrative storytelling, case studies, and action research approaches. Teaching roles focus on developing critical and embodied pedagogies in student teachers.

References


