

# Pedagogical justice and student engagement in South African schooling: Working with the cultural capital of disadvantaged students

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*This article is a conceptual consideration of what could be regarded as pedagogical justice for disadvantaged students in South African schools. Combining Bourdieu's social reproduction account of education with elements of Bernstein's consideration of the internal dynamics that constitute the pedagogic relay, the article considers the pedagogical terms upon which these students can meaningfully be engaged in their school going. Such engagement, I argue, has to contend with the cultural resistance displayed by disadvantaged students towards their schooling which they view as being against their class-cultural interests. The article suggests that teachers' pedagogical practices at the site of the school present one key space to leverage the socially just pedagogies necessary for productive school engagement. I consider the conceptual bases upon which such a pedagogical approach can proceed. I advance the argument that student engagement ought to proceed on the basis of a combination of a 'social relations of pedagogies' orientation, on the one hand, and what I refer to as an 'explicit pedagogies' approach to recontextualisation of work, on the other. It is the main argument of this article that pedagogical justice for disadvantaged students lies in providing a pedagogical scaffold between their life world knowledge's and accessing the school knowledge codes. Such an approach supports induction into the vertical logic of the school code as central to students' school success, but it argues for pedagogical incorporation of horizontal knowledge's central to securing active engagement with their schooling.*

**Keywords:** Pedagogical recontextualisation, socially just pedagogies, life world knowledge's, school code, social relations of pedagogy, school engagement, disadvantaged students

## Introduction

This article is a conceptual consideration of the pedagogical bases on which student engagement, with particular reference to disadvantaged or working-class students, can be transacted in the South African schooling context. The key assumption at work here is the view that, in the history of modern schooling, working-class students have made tenuous connections with formal school going. This is aptly captured in Willis's (1977) seminal study on the resistance practices of the 'lads' in a working-class UK context. These male students chose to resist the message system of their schooling, actively opting instead to take on the cultural systems of working-class life which, in effect, led to them turning their backs on the promised meritocratic emergence associated with successful schooling. They chose to align themselves with the message system of their working-class culture, which secured them access to their neighbourhood's popular socialisation, lifestyles and employment prospects. Working-class student failure can be understood in part in the light of the lack of everyday functional engagements with their schooling. These students adopt attitudes and identifications in opposition to the school's disciplining and knowledge-acquisition processes. In other words, they generally refuse to imbibe the message system of their schools which, in turn, has a negative impact on the quality of their school engagement. This consequently prevents them from successfully passing through the school system and into higher education. By opting out, or refusing to opt in, their opportunity to learn is diminished as a result of the ways in which they 'read' the cultural dissonance that they experience during their schooling. In other words, they come to evaluate their school going as fundamentally against their own class interests.

This raises an enduring problem faced by concerns over the relationship between schooling and social justice regarding the necessity of making schools more meaningful places of cultural and intellectual inclusion and engagement for disadvantaged students. A fatalistic approach would have it that there is hardly anything that schools can do to narrow this gap, instead placing the onus for these students' improved school encounters on the amelioration that broader structural processes are meant to ensure. Disadvantaged students would only be properly engaged by the culture of the school when their poverty is addressed and they have acquired the necessary infrastructural, material and symbolic support in stable family arrangements for there to be a meaningful and positive association between their social contexts and their schooling. On such a view, schools have no direct responsibility for addressing the school cultural gap associated with this form of exclusion experienced by disadvantaged working-class students during their schooling.

The literature on the sociology of school development suggests two broad views with regard to this challenge: an optimistic school effectiveness and improvement view, which suggests that schooling could make the difference in leveraging a productive platform for shifting students' cultural registers and engagement attitudes; and a social reproductionist outlook, which suggests that schooling simply reproduces already existing social inequalities and, in the process, legitimates them. These, I suggest, are reductive views about the actual potentialities of schools to address social justice concerns, especially in the way that they consider the potentialities involved in leveraging a meaningful school engagement platform that could connect disadvantaged students to a productive engagement with school disciplining and knowledge-generation processes. I suggest that the reality associated with the impact of schooling in bridging the gap between the working-class culture and school engagement is complex and that only a careful consideration of the conceptual terrain of schooling will provide some space to insert social justice concerns into everyday school processes. McFadden and Munns (2002:359) support this when they suggest that:

*the persistence of culturally supported school resistance [as in the case of the lads in Willis's study] intensifies the challenge for educators committed to opening pathways so that students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds have greater chances of educational opportunity and success.*

This article is a consideration of the conceptual terms on which such a school engagement platform can be founded. Central to this is what Basil Bernstein (1990) labels 'the pedagogic relay' in reference to pedagogical processes established by teachers in school and classroom knowledge practices as a key site for considering a conception of responsive student engagement. It is the pedagogical site of teachers' practices that offers the conceptual space for an alternative approach to the ways in which schools can engage students from disadvantaged background; Bernstein (1990) refers to this as the relatively autonomous curriculum and teaching practices that play out in the Pedagogic Recontextualising Field (PRF) of the school's knowledge message system. Unlike the bifurcation suggested by those who favour a strict separation between horizontal and vertical knowledge discourses (Moore & Muller, 1999), I suggest that establishing a pedagogical relationship between these two knowledge discourses – one which respects the importance of the vertical logic of school knowledge – would provide a useful bridge between the life world contexts of disadvantaged students and the knowledge codes that inform school knowledge. Creating such a bridge provides one way of transacting a more dynamic interactive approach to engaging disadvantaged students in their schooling and the school's codes. In the light of this, Pierre Bourdieu (1973:17), the other key theorist whose work underpins the analytical task of this article, suggests that pedagogies of a particular kind could make a difference to disadvantaged students' experiences and knowledge take-up in schools. He explains:

*If all pupils were given the technology of intellectual enquiry, and if in general they were given rational ways of working (such as the art of choosing between compulsory tasks and spreading them over time) then an important way of reducing inequalities based on cultural inheritance would have been achieved.*

In the next section of this article I consider, firstly, what Hattam, Brennan, Zipin and Cober (2009) refer to as the cultural capital misalignment that characterises the schooling engagement experiences of working-class students and, secondly, the nature of student engagement in the South African urban context as an example of the complex ways in which students in the post-apartheid order assemble their modalities of educational engagement. The suggestion here is that pedagogical recontextualisation in schools and classrooms has to attend to the nature of these subjective constructions if our schooling processes have some chance of leveraging an engaging school platform.

This section is followed by a principled consideration of the nature of pedagogical recontextualisation in the light of the discursive and political contexts of schooling and classroom practice. The argument proffered here is that the South African curriculum implementation field – what Bernstein (1990) refers to as the Official Recontextualisation Field (ORF) – is characterised by what could be described as a ‘thin pedagogical platform’, with reference to the kinds of pedagogies that teachers have discursively been positioned to implement as the consequence of a hegemonic state logic of performance that is more concerned with instrumental results-based outcomes than an acknowledgment, valuing and promotion of an internally referenced commitment to teacher professional development. Such a view, based on a ‘pedagogy of same’ (Lingard, 2007), impedes a socially responsive and just approach to student engagement in the country’s schools.

The final section of the article is a conceptualisation of the pedagogical terms upon which a socially just and inclusive pedagogical platform can be launched. Such a perspective would have to take account of the nature of the subjective engagements that students have with their schooling and its knowledge codes on the one hand, and the need to rescue the pedagogical identifications of teachers from an instrumental pedagogical base and mobilise a deeper professional knowledge engagement orientation.

The argument is made in this article for an explicit or visible pedagogical approach where the teacher is able to take charge of the scaffolding from horizontal to vertical discourse knowledge insertion. It is in this scaffolding where space for engagement with students’ life world contexts can meaningfully be used as a bridge into the school knowledge code. Conceptually, the aim is neither a simple valorisation of everyday knowledge nor an uncritical acceptance of the school knowledge code. The challenge is to provide students with the intellectual tools for taking up and critically interacting with the school code. This is a sophisticated approach which many educational theorists argue has to be pursued on the basis of a long-term vision of pedagogical renewal founded on a vision of teachers whose professional lives are more informed by internal accountability systems than external monitoring and control (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010:93-116). It is clear that such an approach will depend on a vastly improved teacher education platform able to produce teachers who can work across different knowledge forms as a way of engaging diverse students in their classrooms.

## **Cultural capital misalignment and the nature of students’ school engagements**

The starting point for this section is Bourdieu’s insight that people enter schooling from different structural positions associated with different social habits (Hattam *et al.*, 2009:304). They embody distinctive qualities of cultural disposition, or ‘habitus’, acquired through early life immersion in particular contexts. Bourdieu explains that dispositions, in turn, operate selectively in schools as ‘cultural capital’ of stronger or weaker species (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1986:20) suggests that the “educational system ... maintains a preexisting social order, that is, the gap between pupils endowed with unequal amounts of cultural capital”. Hattam *et al.* (2009:20) explain that in schools “the dispositions of children’s life contexts favour those with alignment to the cultural arbitrary of the ... middle-class schools”. The dispositions of working-class students are, in effect, out of alignment with the middle-class cultural or knowledge capital that guarantees school success. In this sense pedagogical ‘injustice’ refers to the lack of fit between the cultural capital of working class children and the school’s cultural and knowledge processes, i.e. the school code.

Understanding the school code as involving a dispositional receptivity for middle-class capital at the institutional site of the school helps explain why the school’s ability to actively engage disadvantaged

students is circumscribed. As a result, as cultural institutions, schools are unable to provide a productive engagement platform for these students. The key reason for the lack of school success generally manifested by disadvantaged students is not only that they come to school with the ‘wrong’ cultural capital, but also that schools, in their fixation on providing access to the school code facilitated by a narrow institutional culture, fail to provide a conceptual bridge between the diverse forms of cultural capital of these students and access to the school code. It therefore follows that these students’ engagements are impeded by their possession of the ‘wrong’ capitals, which schools struggle to recognise and leverage institutionally and pedagogically.

Teese and Polesel (2003:50-71) provide an explanation of how students whose embodied capital does not match the schooling code miss out on meaningful school engagement. They argue that the curriculum makes no connection with their community contexts, so there is no intrinsic value to engaging students in the school’s educational experience, and secondly, as a result of this lack of connection, working-class students miss out on the extrinsic value afforded by school success that gives access to further education and employment. Through the inability of schools to connect with and engage their forms of cultural capital, these students miss out on the critical knowledge’s that schooling could provide as well as on the opportunity of insertion into the educational and occupational structure beyond schooling. The pedagogical injustice that schools visit on disadvantaged students therefore has pernicious consequences for their ability to value the exchange meritocratic worth of school and the intrinsic use value to inform their critical life dispositions and choices.

The assumption of this article is the view that pedagogical justice has to mean that student engagement with respect to disadvantaged students, i.e. the 80% of children in South Africa’s schools who can be regarded as working class, impoverished and destined structurally for educational disengagement – must focus on a pedagogical engagement platform that connects school-based learning with students’ own life worlds experiences. In other words, the connection between the instrumental exchange value of schooling and its intrinsic use value has to be drawn. Drawing on political philosopher, Nancy Fraser (1996:3-6), I suggest that making a pedagogical connection between life world and school codes is a challenge that moves beyond binary social justice thinking. Commitment to pedagogical justice is based on the imbrications of two types of claim: an egalitarian redistributive claim that emphasises the redistribution of elite capital (read the school code) and a recognition claim that values social-cultural identity formations (read life world code). Such a redistribution versus recognition tension would issue in a classroom pedagogical approach that simultaneously involves knowledge generation and identity negotiation, both of which processes are intimately linked to the inequalities of broader social structures. Lingard (2007:246) explains that “we need to acknowledge the weave between identity negotiation and the production and reproduction of knowledge in the pedagogical encounter and its effects”. In other words, engagement favours neither one nor the other dimension but, instead, insists on working with both dimensions in generating a responsive student educational platform.

Lingard (2007:246) reminds us that teacher pedagogies can be seen to be deeply therapeutic in their care of students, but “indifferent in terms of working with difference and making a difference in academic and opportunity senses”. He seems to be warning against a form of student engagement that lapses into over-compensatory or pastoral behaviour, but fails to work progressively with either the demands of recognition and inclusion, on the one hand, and academic or knowledge engagement, on the other. My own work on subjective engagement by students with their schooling in urban context reveals an almost complete lack of understanding by schools of what I called the ‘educational subject on the move’ (Fataar, 2012), resulting in the lack of a pedagogical reception for these students’ cultural and educational backgrounds, coupled with an inability to work productively with their dispositions and knowledge’s.

As an illustration, I draw on my research in a range of urban sites to exemplify the discursive gap between the complex make-up of student subjectivities in urban South African contexts and their schools’ engagement and educational modalities. My work highlights the geographic, affective and educational contours of their school going as they precariously move across the city space to access their schools of choice. I described the nature of their school interactions thus:

*The children of the black working classes and unemployed poor go to great lengths to access what they perceive as better schools across the city, where they end up receiving a modernist curriculum that strips them of their access to their cultural knowledge and social survival epistemologies, on the assumption that modern middle-class education is what will emancipate them from their parochial cultural identifications. The assumption of cultural assimilation is hard at work in the urban post-apartheid school, albeit with multicultural genuflection to the newer incoming kids' backgrounds. Assimilationist curriculum practices are alive in the city's classrooms, which ostensibly provide the vehicle for their induction into modern life (Fataar, 2012:7).*

The schools in my research deny these students any discursive recognition of their physical and ontological worlds and their epistemic forms, instead inducting them into a one-dimensional, modern racial-colonial canon, i.e. the dominant school knowledge code (Fataar, 2009). These tropes collectively translate into unproblematised pedagogical approaches that conceptualise student learning as a problem in isolation, understood apart from the reconfiguring social forms that swirl around it. The socio-cultural forms of the black working and urban poor, coupled with the everyday deployment of their cultural knowledge's, are not given curricular currency.

Heeding Lingard's view, I suggest that the reception discourses of the wide range of schools in which I did my research indicates that they have not recognised this complex school-going subject in their midst, nor have they provided attenuated inclusive orientations to adjust to these subjects' cultural and everyday knowledge's and identifications. Instead, the schools have discursively positioned themselves as offering culturally assimilationist school experiences and induction into the narrow school code (Dolby, 2001; Johnson, 2007; Fataar, 2007). My research shows how schools go about sustaining this exclusivist culture in which the teachers, often predominantly from racial backgrounds dissimilar to the incoming students, play the leading role in retaining their schools' hegemonic orientations (Fataar, 2009; Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012). The student engagement platforms of these schools play little to no role in recognising and working with the cultural capital and survival and everyday knowledge's of the students, nor have they demonstrably adapted their registers to work with and mediate the cultural registers of these students.

In the ensuing sections of the article I discuss 'pedagogical recontextualisation' as a way of responding to the pedagogical injustice implicit in the lack of interaction between the cultural capital arising from the life world contexts of disadvantaged students and their schools' educational engagements, especially their pedagogical orientations. The task here is to develop a conceptual grounding for a responsive and inclusive pedagogical approach, on the one hand, and academic immersion into the school's knowledge code, on the other. Having worked with a stance that emphasises the importance of understanding the impact of the ever-changing socialities that now co-construct the educational subjectivities of learners and their schools' institutional platforms, the focus on pedagogical recontextualisation takes us into the how of the pedagogic relay, in other words, the conceptual bases on which pedagogical processes are able to combine a focus on life world and the school codes. The cultural capital misalignment that schools and teachers normally operate within has to be addressed and challenged by an incorporation of the life world contexts of their students. There has to be greater connection between the everyday knowledge's deployed by the students and the school curriculum and teachers' pedagogical practices. As Hattam *et al.* (2009:305) suggest: "only when schooling is organised to make this link can the experience of intrinsic value in education become established, and enable scaffolding to success in the mainstream curriculum, leading to extrinsic rewards from schooling". It is to a principled consideration of this pedagogical scaffolding that I now turn.

## **Pedagogical recontextualisation as a site for social justice-oriented schooling practices**

Teacher pedagogy is not the silver bullet for resolving the school engagement dilemma. The ability of pedagogy to leverage an engaging educational orientation to receive and induct students into a critical knowledge orientation is circumscribed as much by the extant professional teaching culture, of which pedagogy forms a crucial part, as it is by the conceptual limitations placed on its ability to challenge the

class culture-school gap. The intractable nature of this gap is extremely difficult to mitigate by classroom pedagogy. Notwithstanding this pessimistic view, pedagogy remains the key leveraging site for providing an ameliorating platform for social justice in education. What has emerged from the school effectiveness literature over the last two decades – subsequent to the Coleman Report in the USA in 1966 that found the impact of context to be the overriding factor in determining schooling success – is that teachers and their pedagogies are the one factor that contribute most to improved student achievement. Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Winefield and York (1966) explain that, of all the schooling factors, it is teachers and their pedagogies which contribute most to better learning outcomes for all, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This brings into view the challenge of conceptualising pedagogy, which is located at the intersection between knowledge production and its reproduction at the site of the school. This intersection could be regarded as a mediating space where knowledge recontextualisation via the implementation of the curriculum takes place through the classroom pedagogical work of teachers – what I referred to earlier as the recontextualisation field of pedagogic discourse. Teachers and their pedagogies are central to this recontextualisation.

As a concept ‘pedagogy’ refers to the process through which knowledge is produced in interactive knowledge production processes between the teacher and students. Pedagogy addresses the how of this transmission and the reproduction of knowledge involved in its production, i.e. the *techne* of the knowledge transfer as well as its knowledge substance. Lusted (1986:3) explains that the concept of pedagogy enables us “to question the validity of separating these activities so easily by asking under what conditions and what means we ‘come to know’”. He explains that, seen through the prism of pedagogy, what we teach is inseparable from what is being taught and how one learns (*ibid*:4). This perspective brings pedagogy into the realm of cultural production and exchange, opening up the *techne* of teaching for questioning about its implicit assumptions about the nature of the knowledge transferred and the cultural assumptions embedded in these processes.

Pedagogy is part of what Bernstein (1971) refers to as the three-message system of schooling: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and the complex symbiotic relationship between the three. It is the particular emphasis on aspects of this message system that determines the scope for socially engaging pedagogies. Recent policy developments in education in South Africa and the broader international context have resulted in a preponderance of policy discursivity that has had pernicious consequences for teachers’ ‘relative autonomy’ (Apple, 2002). In other words, the school’s message system has been dominated, and arguably corroded, by the curriculum policy dimension, emanating from the ORF. The restricting curriculum policy orientation (Spren & Vally, 2010), that currently informs schools’ pedagogical work, has struggled to leverage an engaging pedagogical orientation. The policy-regulated ORF has not put schools that are in impoverished circumstances in a position to mitigate their material conditions and discursive teaching orientations, impacting negatively on their PRF. Socially engaging pedagogies in these circumstances have very little chance of being established.

Work by myself and my students (Fataar, 2007; Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012; Watson, 2011; Visagie, 2005) on teachers’ professional practice in selected poor schools of Cape Town provides evidence of the existence of teaching environments empty of generative material circumstances and pedagogies. What we found were one-dimensional school sites where teachers were discursively positioned to fulfil the performative requirements of a narrow set of curriculum implementation expectations. Watson (2011) and Visagie (2005), for example, show how teachers’ work is dominated by the pastoral dimension of teaching brought on by the exigent impact of poverty and desperate socialities that flow daily into school (Bhana, Morrell, Epstein & Moletsane, 2006). Fataar and Du Plooy’s (2012) work on students’ learning assemblages across their township living discusses the impact of the reductive educational environment of their school on the homogenising pedagogical approaches of teachers who ignore the rich knowledge’s that students carry with them to school. These are the kinds of contexts that the majority of students in these schools encounter, which the governmental policy platform, i.e. the ORF, failed to leverage productively as inclusive engagement sites.

On the contrary, South Africa's curriculum policy orientation is characterised by a circumscribed, 'teacher-proof' implementation approach (Spren & Vally, 2010) that provides a tight, if not constricted, curriculum classification and framing orientation on the assumption that the country's poorly prepared teachers require a strict regulatory regime to govern curriculum implementation. It is therefore apparent that what has characterised curriculum framings in the USA, UK and other contexts have come to characterise the school message system in South Africa. That is, the message system is dominated by a curriculum and a broader performative policy regime that tightly regulates the realm of pedagogy in schools. What this orientation issues in is what Lingard (2007) and Hayes (2003) describe as thin pedagogising based on 'pedagogies of same'. This involves an emphasis on a narrow school knowledge code, framed by regulative routines that teachers are meant to comply with, and in-service teacher training sessions aimed at preparing them to implement the school code. I argue that this school code is based on a 'pedagogy of same' that is emptied of an ability to incorporate the life world or socially generated knowledge's by which disadvantaged students can be engaged and stimulated. Pedagogies of same focus on a fairly uniform imbibing of the school code with little space for addressing the redistribution-recognition tension that is at the heart of Fraser's (1996) conceptualisation of social justice. Emphasis on the redistribution of the school code leaves little to no space for working with identity constructions of difference and the attendant life world-acquired knowledge's that students carry with them to school. Such pedagogies therefore fall short in addressing the class culture-school gap which, I argue, is decisive for engaging disadvantaged students in their take-up of, and critical engagement with, the school code. The resultant engagement platform has tended to be narrow, circumscribed by a curriculum orientation that provides very little space for socially just pedagogies.

While the moral logic for offering students a narrow pedagogical platform to access the school code cannot be faulted in emphasising the exchange value of schooling, the limiting conceptual logic of such an approach fails to take account of its inability to provide pedagogical traction to engage disadvantaged students in their own learning. In addition, it also falls short of providing them with knowledge for critical life use (Zipin, 2005). Acknowledging the limitations that the existing pedagogical platform of teachers set for teachers' work, as well as the reductive impact of the regulative policy regime that governs teachers, I now go on to offer a conceptualisation of an engaging pedagogical platform that can leverage deep student engagement with the knowledge codes of their schooling.

## **The case for explicit pedagogy based on a 'social relations of pedagogy' approach**

This section is a consideration of the challenge involved in recontextualisation work at the pedagogical site of the school and classroom. I work here with different theoretical strands of work done on what has been described as 'new pedagogies for postmodern times', especially by a group of Australian academics. I make an argument for combining an approach described as 'explicit pedagogies' with a 'social relations of pedagogy' approach. The latter is an attempt to theorise the relational basis of pedagogy, which I argue is the key to gaining disadvantaged students' consent necessary for leveraging their active engagement with school knowledge. Explicit pedagogies, in turn, refer to an attempt to make visible the intellectual parameters of an engaging pedagogical approach that would mitigate what is normally left implicit in school knowledge transfer. Explicit substantive framing of such a pedagogical approach is the key to socially just pedagogies. Drawing on Bourdieu, Lingard (2007:250) explains that pedagogies which are not "intellectually demanding, and which make implicit cultural assumptions, benefit those with the requisite cultural capital obtained through socialisation within the home, and disadvantage the already disadvantaged in terms of such capital". Making the approach to school knowledge and its intellectual and pedagogical parameters visible is one key way of creating a bridge between the cultural capital forms of working-class students and their school engagement. It opens up the unequal distribution of capitals through schooling and allows for an insertion of a critical orientation to school processes. Explicit pedagogies involve a conceptualisation of pedagogy that includes an emphasis on intellectually demanding content, on the one hand, and active recognition and working with life world knowledge's, on the other. I

put forward an argument for using life world knowledge's as a bridge into school knowledge and as a key to a critical dispositional orientation to such knowledge.

While explicit pedagogies, developed below, refer to the substantive properties of socially just pedagogies, an emphasis on the 'social relations of pedagogy' refers to the 'how' of getting disadvantaged students engaged in their school and knowledge constructions. The suggestion I make here is that the 'what' of pedagogies and the 'how' of its social relations in the classroom are entwined in socially just pedagogical recontextualisation work. Emphasis on the relational dimension of pedagogies is presented as the key to unlocking the recognition of the cultural presence of disadvantaged students and gaining their consent with the idea that schooling is in their interest. This position would counteract the view that these students have that schooling is not in their own interests. As suggested earlier, given the class cultural-school gap, students have to be actively acknowledged and engaged by a compelling pedagogical orientation for there to be a chance for their genuine inclusion and consent. Emphasising an engaging relational approach is therefore meant to persuade students that their schooling and its knowledge construction activities are genuinely in their interest. A key challenge for a socially engaging approach in the quest for pedagogical justice is therefore the provision of a relational platform that could secure such engagement.

Developing such a view, McFadden and Munns (2002) suggest that the logic of school rejection by students is based on their developing a negative attitude founded on individual rejection of education from within the cultural solidarity of the group. They explain that "culturally supported school resistance intensifies the challenge for educators committed to opening pathways so that students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds have greater chances of educational opportunity and success" (ibid:359). What is going to make students buy into attempts at engaging with their schooling is a convincing account of the idea that schooling is beneficial for them by providing a rationale for how they can become insiders in the culture of the classroom. School engagement depends on a view of one's presence in a school site where one has self-understanding of playing a meaningful role in such a site. A positive view of their co-presence in their schools is fostered when students are given an opportunity to actively respond to daily experiences and events in their lives, and where the pedagogical focus is on their own cultural interpretations. In this way they would become engaged in producing classroom practices of resistance, compliance, play and creative construction, which would mitigate the school as an alienating cultural site. McFadden and Munns (2002:362) explain that "students come quickly to understand when school is not working for them and when the practices of teachers are not of any use in their own lives, or more pointedly, when their use is illusionary". Conversely, pedagogical approaches that connect with, and engage the cultural and linguistic materials of these students, their socio-historical backgrounds, and their daily navigational practices across the complex spaces of their school going stand a chance of countering the class capital-school misalignment. Connecting with the subjective or relational aspects of their lives and school going holds the potential for providing a compelling, if not unproblematic, platform for socially just pedagogies.

It is clear that it is the students' depth and quality of school engagement relations and experiences that will determine whether the class cultural-school gap is successfully being closed. McFadden and Munns (2002:364) explain that gaining students' active consent would be the result of their own determination of whether schools are serving their interests:

*It is the students themselves who will be able to tell us that they are engaged and who will say whether education is working for them in a culturally sensitive and relevant way. It is the students who will be able to tell us whether the offers that education purports to provide are real or illusionary. It is at the messy point of teachers and students responding to each other culturally in relation to classroom discourse and assessment practices where we are truly going to see whether students feel that school is for them. It is within this space that education can provide a chance that is not illusionary, and that can indeed be engaging and lead to purposeful, relevant and productive educational outcomes.*

While emphasis on a compelling consent-generating relational approach is a necessary condition for meaningful school engagement, it is the substantive nature of the pedagogical platform that will determine



its success. This brings me to the rationale for explicit pedagogies meant to unveil and work with the culturally arbitrary connection between middle-class capital and the school code.

Lingard (2007:174) explains that the need for the explicitness of performance criteria and teacher goals for every lesson is a way of opening up pedagogical processes to ensure that schooling is not allowed to work in unequal ways. Key to this conception of pedagogy is the conceptual basis on which the distribution of capitals is made visible. Developed by Australian academics working on what they labelled 'Productive Pedagogies' (Lingard & Mills, 2007) and another group who labelled their work 'Redesigning Pedagogies in the North' (RPiN) (Hattam & Zipin 2009), an approach to pedagogical recontextualisation to engage disadvantaged students emerged that explicitly sought to combine a focus on intellectual rigour and depth with an emphasis on connectedness and relevance. A view of pedagogy is advanced that incorporates both dimensions as a basis for students to access and work critically with school knowledge. Aligned to assessment orientations able to elicit rigorous engagement, this pedagogical approach emphasises higher-order thinking, substantive critical conversation and generative connections to the world beyond the classroom. Valuing and working with difference is also intended as a key dimension. The emphasis on integrating the redistribution of school capital with critical connectedness to the lives of students is based on actively mediating the recognition-redistribution tension proffered by Fraser (1996), which she regards as key to social justice work. This approach is meant to bring the various forms of capital of disadvantaged students into a generative interaction with the required school code, in effect, laying a basis for critically accessing the school code. This active mediating approach to knowledge production is intended as a means of developing a knowledge engagement basis that would convince students that schooling is in their interest. In other words, such pedagogical recontextualisation is intended to substantially leverage students' productive engagement with their schooling and is regarded as a crucial component in augmenting the relational dimension of pedagogy discussed above.

This pedagogical approach is meant to open space for inserting what is described as students' life world knowledge's as a constitutive component of a school's teaching platform. Eschewing a deficit view of students, such an approach assumes that students' lives and knowledge's are assets worthy of valorisation and critical engagement. Hattam *et al.* (2009) explain that the ability to engage students in learning depends on infusing the curriculum and pedagogy with the rich familiarities of life world knowledge and practice. These context-dependent knowledge's are valorised for their important relational benefit, i.e. students begin to value school connections made to their own lives that allow teachers to gain students' active consent as participants in schooling which they begin to recognise as meant for them. It also provides a pedagogical platform to engage them in their own critical understanding of their life world knowledge's, while enabling the pedagogical recontextualisation process to establish an interactive and mediating relationship with the school knowledge code.

The use of the 'funds of knowledge' approach in the RPiN project is an example of working pedagogically with the students' life world knowledge's. Foregrounding rich connectivity with students' life worlds, the RPiN project used the funds of knowledge approach, developed by Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) among Hispanic American communities in the USA to capitalise on the students' household and other community resources in the classroom. Funds of knowledge refer to the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills that households use for their daily functioning and survival. These funds include the social and labour histories of families, their social networks, technological use and literacy resources. As context-specific knowledge's these funds are then treated as intellectual resources in school History, Geography, Art and Language classrooms. In this way schools are able to signal that they value the capitals of disadvantaged students as well as establish a platform for critical interaction with their knowledge's. An active consent generating pedagogy based on acceptance that schooling is in their interest would be facilitated, in other words, what life world knowledge use in pedagogies allows is the idea that schooling is for them.

I argue that a further pedagogical modality is required: the necessity of scaffolding from life world knowledge engagement to explicit and practical learning of the cultural codes needed for success in mainstream school work. This view respects vertical insertion into the school code, which holds the

promise of induction into the context-independent knowledge of power. Disadvantaged students ought to be given access to the knowledge of power and its exchange value which will enable them to enter into further and higher education and professional employment. The emphasis on life world or horizontal knowledge forms in school is not meant to cut them off from vertical knowledge acquisition. This dimension secures active student engagement and connecting points into the vertical school code. These two knowledge forms are thus held in critical juxtaposition, and as Delpit (1988:296) explains, “we must keep the perspective that people are experts on their own lives ... but in the second instance, students must be assisted in the learning the culture of power”.

A key conceptual challenge remains, as expressed in the work of Bernstein around the commensurability of horizontal (life world) knowledge and vertical school knowledge (Bernstein, 1999; Moore & Muller, 1999). There remains deep scepticism about mixing the two forms on the basis that there is a structural difference between these two knowledge forms. Important theoretical work has emerged to question this position. Wilson and Williams (2012:3), for example, base their critique of this bifurcation on Western epistemological thinking, which emphasises “a dualistic framework of thinking and practices, endemic in education systems, which constructs intellectual challenge (or ‘academic rigour’) and relevance as incompatible – or at least as antagonistic to each other.” Zipin (2005) calls the pursuit of both life world and school knowledge an exquisite tension which remains unresolvable, yet ought to be pursued.

The view adopted in this article is based on an acknowledgement of the difficulty of working across these knowledge forms, especially given the relatively sophisticated pedagogical platform such an approach would necessitate. I favour an intermediate approach that conceptualises the pedagogical relationship between them as involving careful processing and scaffolding of life world knowledge’s onto school knowledge. It is in the scaffolding activities led by the teacher, through strong classification, i.e. control of substantive knowledge acquisition in the classroom, and in active interaction with students, in which the potential resides for deeper recognition and incorporation of their knowledge’s into classroom processes. Life world knowledge’s would therefore serve as a bridge into deeper and more meaningful school engagement. McFadden and Munns (2002:363-364) suggest that pedagogical framing in such scaffolding processes, i.e. control over the pacing, sequencing and control of the knowledge production processes, should be relaxed in order for students to meaningfully engage in the social relations of the classroom pedagogy on the assumption that a more relaxed interactive approach to framing is meant to secure such engagement. This, in turn, would encourage a more productive approach to engaging in the knowledge construction work in the classroom.

The risk of having the life world knowledge’s co-opted by, or assimilated into, school knowledge is worth taking, despite the warning that this might mean the failure of recognition of difference on the basis that co-optation would mean that the life world knowledge’s would become something else, i.e. school knowledge. Bernstein (1999) warned that recontextualising everyday knowledge into the school curriculum would not lead to more effective acquisition of school knowledge. Here I suggest that the potential of incorporating life world knowledge’s into teachers’ pedagogies for persuading students that schooling is in their interest would trump considerations about what knowledge form is eventually produced. In this light, I would argue that life world knowledge’s have to be conceptualised as a bridge into induction and critical engagement with the school code. Such a view holds the potential for engaging disadvantaged students through the pedagogical incorporation of life world knowledge’s into an interactive relationship meant to secure students’ interest in and consent for their schooling. This would provide the basis for socially just and inclusive pedagogical recontextualisation in schools. Such an orientation, I suggest, provides some chance of persuading students that schooling is in their own interest, while also providing them with access to the code of power necessary for accessing their future education and employment aspirations.

## Conclusion

This article adopts a heuristic approach for considering the basis for generating pedagogical justice for disadvantaged students who are generally excluded from school success as a result of a mismatch between their working-class cultural capital and the capital associated with successful school going. It is this basic

pedagogical injustice that this article has sought to bring into view. It asked how we can get these students to actively engage in their school going, despite their alienation from the culture and knowledge practices of their school. The pedagogical recontextualisation that I favour is meant to challenge the current prevalence of a 'thin pedagogies' approach to curriculum implementation in South African schools. I argued that this approach is neither capable of engaging disadvantaged students in their schooling, nor would it succeed in providing a pedagogical platform for deep critical interaction with the school knowledge code. It issues in a 'pedagogies of same' orientation that favours the middle classes as a result of their close cultural capital alignment with the school code.

I am not oblivious to the reductive policy environment in which teachers have to do their professional work, nor to the generally weak pedagogical and content knowledge capacities of teachers in this country. Socially just pedagogical recontextualisation would have to be understood as a long-term project aimed at the considerable improvement of the conditions for teachers' socialisation as members of an internally regulated profession in materially enabling work environments, on the one hand, and their intellectual and pedagogical improvement, on the other. The article has nonetheless argued that teacher pedagogies are the key to leveraging a social justice orientation in school.

I have argued that it is in a re-oriented pedagogical recontextualisation approach at the site of the school where such a productive engagement can be established. Working with the redistribution-recognition tension that constitutes Fraser's (1996) approach to social justice, I propose a pedagogy founded on a rich relational approach that has the ability to leverage students' consent for their active engagement with school. This approach is motivated by the need to persuade students to internalise the view that schooling is in their interest and meant for them. Such an engagement platform is connected to what I have labelled an explicit pedagogies orientation that makes the substance of the pedagogical work visible. Intellectual rigour, relevance and recognition of difference are the conceptual cornerstones of this pedagogical orientation. This translates into pedagogies that incorporate the life world knowledge's of the students into the pedagogical process and use them as a link into knowledge construction associated with the school's knowledge code. Valorising the life contexts and knowledge's of students is meant to secure the disadvantaged students' engagement with their schooling and the acquisition of the school knowledge necessary for exercising their future educational aspirations. It also provides a basis to work with their schooling knowledge construction processes beyond utilitarian use by also providing intellectual material for application in their lives. Such a critical pedagogical recontextualisation platform has the potential to realise pedagogical justice in meaningfully engaging working-class students in their schooling.

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