Youth (dis)engagement across a range of educational contexts within Aotearoa/New Zealand will be discussed in this symposium, as part of the Poverty and Education Series hosted by the Educational Theory, Policy and Practice Research Hub. This symposium will specifically explore contemporary issues of (dis)engagement for young people often marginalised within education contexts. Three inter-related spaces will be examined including Alternative Education, NEET and Youth Guarantees. Through a multiplicity of perspectives including youth ‘voice’ methodology and (mis)representation, structural and institutional poverty, and policy critiques, the aim of this symposium will be to provoke discussion and debate relating to these issues.

Day and Time: 27th October, 2015, 9am – 11am
Venue: Wheki 101
RSVP: judy.bruce@canterbury.ac.nz
Refreshments will be served

Programme

9.00-9.10: Welcome

9.10-9.30: Exploring young people’s experiences of disengagement through ‘talk’: “What are young people saying about their experiences of mainstream secondary schooling?” Alison McCormack

9.30-9.50: The youth guarantee scheme: Disengaged youth and the promise of NCEA, Dr Liz Gordon

9:50-10.10: The silent space of poverty and alienation: Alternative Education in New Zealand, Dr Judy Bruce

10:10-11am: Morning tea and Discussion

Full abstract details available over page
Youth and (Dis) Engagement in Education:

A critique of NEET, Youth Guarantees, and Alternative Education Contexts

Abstracts

Exploring young people’s experiences of disengagement through ‘talk’: “What are young people saying about their experiences of mainstream secondary schooling?” Alison McCormack

In my presentation, I discuss my MA research that explores young people’s talk for their unique perspectives of disengagement from mainstream secondary schooling. I chose this research area because ultimately, I wanted to hear why the 11 young people (who participated) left secondary school with few or no NCEA credits. To achieve this exploration I worked in consultation with the Ngai Tahu Research Centre, and collaborated with Te Runanga o Nga Maata Waka, (Nga Maata Waka), a NEET (not in education, employment or training) Youth Service provider, located in the eastern suburbs of Christchurch. The findings that emerged from the young people’s voices highlighted their sensitivity towards their unsuccessful schooling identities, particularly with the way others perceive them as either dropouts or losers. From their talk, four distinct voices emerged, the voice of uncertainty, the voice of engagement, the voice of regret, and the voice of silence. The findings from the four staff members at Nga Maata Waka identified the importance of relationships for young people and how within their role as a NEET Youth Service provider, they transition young people back into education, employment, or a vocational training programme. Their voices along with others contributed to the voice of knowing, which may or may not influence whether young people choose to talk or not about their schooling experiences. What emerged from the voice of knowing is how the concepts of ‘silence’ and ‘silencing’ affects young people’s voices and for the ways we as others with our voice of knowing, intentionally or unintentionally speak on the behalf of young people.

The youth guarantee scheme: Disengaged youth and the promise of NCEA, Dr Liz Gordon

Way back in the 1980s, my PhD thesis was a critique of youth training schemes. The main point was that such schemes were about a ‘holding pattern’ for disadvantaged youth in a period of high unemployment. Well, youth unemployment has been high ever since and, as predicted, the primary response by the state is still youth training, offering very little for very little return. The children of the first wave of youth trainees, and arguably in some cases their children too, are now signing up for the youth guarantee fees free scheme. Within the context of a generation or more of child poverty, and the failure of schools to effectively educate many poor and disadvantaged youth, these young people, and their tutors, struggle to improve their opportunities. The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is the promise of NCEA level 2. Is this false promise, or a pathway to the future? In a brief presentation, I will outline the findings and implications of a large qualitative study (2014-15) of the youth guarantee scheme.

The silent space of poverty and alienation: Alternative Education in New Zealand, Dr Judy Bruce

AE has the power to activate significant change in the lives of young people; however, it has been criticised for lacking capacity across of range of areas including adequate resources, learning rigour, and high burn out of staff. In fact one source describes the sector as having both “a poverty of vision and poverty of resourcing” (Higgins & Nairn, 2014). After 20 years of ad hoc development and emerging grass roots programming in the Christchurch region we decided it was timely to capture the current issues and dilemmas by researching the views of AE Consortium staff, AE managers and AE staff in the region. In this presentation I will share some of these insights and suggest future possibilities for development and change to increase capacity in the sector.