



Social Class: Te Mātaiaho | the New Zealand Curriculum Refresh's 'Inconvenient Truth'?

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Abstract

In this paper, we connect with Martin Thrupp's calls for class-based analysis in education policy by problematising the absence of social class in the refreshed New Zealand curriculum, *Te Mātaiaho* (2023). To contextualise this absence, we locate this curriculum policy in a historical perspective and interpret its 'identity turn' as an expression of what philosopher Nancy Fraser calls 'progressive neoliberalism'. We conclude our contribution with a reflection on the reactionary neoliberal response of the current National-led government and a call for educational researchers in Aotearoa New Zealand to more seriously consider social class in their analyses.

Keywords Social class · Curriculum policies · Aotearoa New Zealand · Te Mātaiaho · Progressive neoliberalism

Introduction

In this contribution, we problematise the silence around social class in *Te Mātaiaho: The Refreshed New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2023) despite its explicit focus on social justice. A silence that Martin Thrupp (e.g., Thrupp, 2007, 2014, 2015) repeatedly denounced in the field of education policy and research. Martin Thrupp's work, while not focused on the study of curriculum, was committed to exposing the intricate and ever-changing ways in which education is embedded in broader processes of social class (re)production in what he called education's 'inconvenient truth' (Thrupp, 2007). This concern underpins our argument that social class, in both its material and cultural dimensions, was largely absent in the curriculum

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refresh. To support our discussion, we begin by clarifying what we understand by social class and why we consider its absence in the curriculum problematic. Then, we situate this absence in a historical context and problematise Te Mātaiaho's identity turn. We conclude the paper with a reflection on the latest curriculum developments signalled by the current National-led government and a call for educators and educational researchers to engage in class-based analysis.

Social Class, School Curriculum and Progressive Neoliberalism

Social class is a contested concept whose meaning cannot be taken for granted. New Zealand historian Phillips (2018) described social classes as:

...major social groupings where the members of a group share similar levels of economic resources, property, status and prestige. Usually this extends over several generations. Most societies have hierarchies of such groupings, and New Zealand is no exception. (para. 2)

As Rashbrooke (2021) explains, this definition identifies three key elements of social classes: the first refers to the concentration of 'goods' or capitals in different forms (e.g., economic, social, cultural); the second points at an implicit hierarchy among these groups, with some enjoying a more advantageous status than others; and the third element refers to the stability of the groups and the restricted access to the most prestigious classes. Perhaps the most influential theorists of social class have been Karl Marx, Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu¹. Beyond differences, all their definitions include both material dimensions related to class (e.g., wealth distribution) and cultural/identitarian aspects derived from experiences of belonging to such groups. A consideration rooted in the classic Marxian distinction between a class *in* itself (based on 'objective' measures) and a class *for* itself (based on the group's sense of belonging and acts in their interest).

Perhaps because the groupings identified by Marx (i.e., capitalists and proletariat) and Weber (i.e., dominant entrepreneurial groups, the petite bourgeoisie, middle class and unqualified working class) might not fully apply to current societies, there has been renewed interest in the last few decades for recognising new categories in each of the groupings. As a result, the language of class has become multi-accented: Standing (2011) uses the term 'precariat', Piketty (2014, 2020) distinguishes between 'Brahmin Left' and 'Merchant right', Lind (2020) opts for 'managerial elite'. In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, Nolan (2007) talks about the 'underclass', while Rashbrooke (2021) has more recently proposed the term 'well-being classes'. Whatever the category to describe the changes in class structures and composition, the point of all these scholars is that social class is a key analytical tool to understand current social phenomena, such as economic inequality, increasing concentration of

¹For a discussion on how Marx, Weber and Bourdieu's theories of social class apply to the New Zealand context, see Rashbrooke (2021) and Ongley (2016).

wealth, and the limits of social mobility, and to investigate the way past processes shape current social positions.

Removing the explicit mention of social class from the curriculum not only obscures its existence, but also misses an opportunity to understand ongoing economic disparities and how they intersect with educational achievement, or how they are intertwined with racial and gender injustices. Further, by neglecting social class as a cultural form and by implicitly portraying working class as an identity not worth affirming, possibilities for a collective political identity are also denied. We want to be clear that we are not advocating for a curriculum that celebrates (and, therefore, reifies) social class as an identity. Instead, we advocate for a curriculum that exposes the material reality of social stratification and connects—in Nancy Fraser’s terminology—‘politics of economic redistribution’ with ‘politics of cultural recognition’. This curriculum would also require critically analysing the classist forms of culture that denigrate anything considered ‘working class’ and providing spaces for imagining and articulating collective efforts to fight against economic inequality together with other forms of social and cultural inequality.

We would also like to make it clear that our critique here is not aimed at Te Mātaiaho’s decolonising project and its commitment to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, New Zealand’s founding document. On the contrary, we embrace Te Mātaiaho’s recognition of Māori as tangata whenua and its endeavour to affirm Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). What we would like to question here, however, is the spurious dissociation between the decolonial project and the anti-capitalist project, which has come with the curricular turn to identity-affirmation. The articulation between colonialism and capitalism is complex. The European settlement of New Zealand was a colonial act, but from the start the settlers sought to establish a capitalist economy. Dennon (1983) used the term ‘settler capitalism’. Ince (2018) has recently used the term ‘colonial capitalism’, and in the New Zealand context, Scobie and Sturman (2024) say that: “Any discussion of colonialism that tiptoes around capitalism is incomplete” (p. 8). This is in line with the argument of our paper: we should be suspicious when terms relating to capitalism and class are left out of educational discourse.

From our perspective, Nancy Fraser’s (2017, 2019) concept of ‘progressive neoliberalism’ is a suitable explanatory framework to make sense of this dissociation between the decolonial and the anti-capitalist project. Fraser (2017, 2019) describes progressive neoliberalism as a financed-centred political economy tied to a progressive politics of recognition where the interests of capital are maintained through a commitment to a politics of difference. She conceptualises progressive neoliberalism as a ‘hegemonic bloc’ designed to ameliorate the effects—not address the causes—of neoliberalism, thereby resisting the formation of alternative economies and social structures. Fraser’s (Gramscian) use of hegemonic bloc refers to the amalgamation of diverse social groupings who, in coming together, shape political decision-making in powerful ways. In doing so, this bloc is able to establish and control the discursive field around what counts as socially just reform (Fraser, 2017). This framing is important because it reveals how progressive neoliberalism’s persuasive pull comes from its ability to co-opt ideas across political divides. According to Fraser, progressive neoliberalism involves the neoliberal co-option of social justice calls connected to a progressive politics of recognition. Importantly, this emphasis leads to the dis-

placement of a politics of economic redistribution meaning that neoliberalism's economic imperatives remain the same. Fraser does not advocate for class politics over identity politics, instead, she argues for an analysis that identifies the overlapping sources of injustice in financialised capitalism.

Following Fraser, education scholars (Slater & Means, 2023; Sharma et al., 2023) have recently analysed how elements of progressive neoliberalism permeate education discourse by offering a commitment to diversity without challenging economic arrangements. That is to say, education has drawn from progressive ideas to imbue a 'recognition ethos' (Fraser, 2017) in various aspects of schooling such as curriculum. As we argue below, Te Mātaiaho's focus on identity-affirmation seems to represent an expression of progressive neoliberalism that is dominated by a progressive politics of recognition.

The Origins of a Curricular Silence

The denial of social class is not limited to the curriculum and/or the educational domain. Much evidence suggests that tolerance towards economic inequality and the dissipation of class consciousness are part of a broader social phenomenon (e.g., Nel, 2021), which is not exclusive to Aotearoa New Zealand (see Baker et al., 2009; Bauman, 2001; Savage, 2000). This phenomenon, however, has its particular genealogy in the New Zealand context. The myth of New Zealand as a classless society has dominated national narratives—and the historiography—of the country since the colonial process (see Jesson, 1992; Millen, 1984; Nolan, 2007; Olssen, 1977). The egalitarian ethos that underpinned the illusion of classlessness played a key role in the settlement process (Olssen, 1977), the construction of national identity (Nolan, 2007), and the development of mass education (Codd & Openshaw, 2005). As historians have pointed out (Nolan, 2007; Olssen, 1977), however, there are few historical records detailing instances of vertical and horizontal mobility, social stratification, income allocation, and the role of education as a determinant of class position, which make it difficult to historically test the 'truth' behind the myth.

While compared to other countries, class consciousness within Aotearoa New Zealand remained weak (e.g., Davidson, 1989). The rationales behind educational and curricular policies during the 19th and much of the 20th centuries reveal a recognition of economic inequalities and aspirations to, perhaps not necessarily reduce them, but to provide opportunities for individuals to avoid social reproduction. The 1877 Education Act that provided free, compulsory and secular education for all New Zealanders was, indeed, an epitome of the egalitarian ideology (Codd & Openshaw, 2005). The social reforms of the first Labour Government in the 1930s, including their pack of education policies, also had the realisation of the equal opportunities deal as an explicit ambition, which was linked to the ideal of democratic citizenship. As Peter Fraser articulated this ideal in his famous quote:

The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a

right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers. (Fraser, 1939, pp. 2–3)

In the 30s and 40s, the idea of education as a ‘right’ that should be extended to everyone and that ‘ordinary New Zealanders’ could aspire to have something better for their children was a strong feature of educational policy. This idea was further affirmed by The Thomas Report (1944), which following on from the end of the Proficiency Exam in 1936 advocated for an education that would mean the “personal and social needs of the children would be met and they would be prepared to take an active place in our New Zealand society as worker, neighbour, home maker and citizen”.

In the 60s and 70s, through Māori renaissance and the women’s liberation movement, the egalitarian myth in education was challenged for marginalising particular groups (Middleton, 1987; Walker, 2016). The Currie Report (1962) broaches these exclusions and the curricular materials of the early 70s began to consider racial and gender injustices together with economic matters. See for example, the series for the Secondary School Curriculum developed in the early 1970s with Bill Renwick as Assistant Director-General of Education. The curriculum guidance began with the following diagnosis:

Secondary education in this country is in restless exploratory phase... The radical criticisms touch the entire fabric of society. The attacks on capitalism, democracy in its Western-liberal form and religion are not, of course, new... It is more than a century since Marx argued that capitalism and democracy are related instruments of middle-class social dominance... What is new is the addition of the family and the school to the outdated institutions of oppression. The family is under attack as a forcing house for neuroses and a main perpetrator of female slavery. Schools and other institutions of formal education are held to be similarly baleful in their effects: if education is to become a liberating influence, society, in the words of Ivan Illich, must be de-schooled. (Department of Education, 1973, p. 3)

Education policy documents of the late 70s showed a growing sensitivity towards cultural discrimination, which was understood in both ethnic and socio-economic terms. As stated by the Report of the Committee on Secondary Education:

No person should be put at disadvantage because of his cultural background. This principle is stated in general terms to cover the many forms of cultural difference. Cultural can be defined in ethnic or social terms. We can talk about Maoris and Pakehas, or Maoris and Cook Islanders, or new migrants and established citizens, or we can even talk about rich or poor, middle class or working class. (Department of Education, 1976, p. 21, *emphasis in the original*)

In these documents, a new purpose began to be attributed to the school curriculum, which was that of building a bi-cultural nation. This project crystallised in the Curriculum Review report (Department of Education, 1987), which, despite its short life,

became the first education policy text that accorded the Treaty of Waitangi a central position (Yukich, 2018). This nation building project along bi-cultural lines, however, came at the expense of the increasing disappearance of class-based analyses. The refresh of Peter Fraser's quote by the Curriculum Review report along liberal lines is illustrative of how social class became the last of a long list of discriminatory cultural backgrounds:

All children in New Zealand, whatever their colour, race, gender, religious beliefs, intellect, physical abilities, economic or social background, are entitled to an education which respects their dignity and uniqueness. Without such respect, the relationship between learners and teachers is impaired and learning suffers. (Department of Education, 1987, p. 2)

This curricular shift in the 70s and 80s reflected a broader political transformation characterised by the resurgence of a more assertive form of liberal individualism, which was embraced by both the Left and the Right (Jesson, 1992). From both ends of the political spectrum, there was a strong critique of New Zealand's state-centric and authoritative political fabric in favour of individualism. As Jesson (1992) explains, on the Left, the student radicalism of the 1960s left behind a layer of middle-class people with a strong anti-authoritarian conscience and a concern for social issues that provided support for the anti-racist, feminist and peace movements. While in other parts of the world these movements were largely inspired by socialist imaginaries (e.g., Fanon, 1965; Smith, 1977), in Aotearoa New Zealand the rise of middle-class social liberalism coincided with the decline of working-class political interest (Jesson, 1992). As a result, the combination of socialism and cultural struggles for recognition became a desirable horizon for only a few (e.g., Middleton, 1987; Poata-Smith, 1996) and the demand for cultural recognition at an official level became part of a project of identity affirmation for the individual, as the quote above shows. On the Right, ideas about managerialism and market fundamentalism were becoming widespread and largely informed the restructuring of the New Zealand state (Kelsey, 1997) and the *Tomorrow's Schools* reform (see e.g., Thrupp, 1999).

The political landscape outlined above explains what Codd (1993) called the 'paradox' of the New Zealand educational reform based on the contradictory ideals of equity and choice. This paradox was reflected in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (1993) as follows: on the one hand, the economic rationality of the curriculum came to the forefront with its focus on the preparation of learners for the 21st century globalised economy and its 'enterprise culture' (O'Neill, 2004), which coincided with the complete disappearance of economic injustice from the curriculum. As this curriculum stated, "The New Zealand Curriculum applies to... all students, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, belief, ability or disability, social or cultural background, or geographical location" (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 3). Note that the reference to 'economic' in this quote is missing, despite several voices at the time raising serious concerns about the impact of the New Right policies on economic inequality and the role of education in its reproduction (e.g., Lauder & Hughes, 1990; Nash et al., 1990; Thrupp, 1999). On the other hand, there was an increasing curricular emphasis on aspects of cultural recognition with several calls for diversity and the

inclusion of Māori concepts and worldviews, even though they often remained at a surface conceptual level (McCarthy, 1997).

The broad lines of this curricular paradox were still present in the 2007 *New Zealand Curriculum*, despite—or perhaps thanks to—its ‘third way’ approach and emphasis on social responsibility, inclusion, and sustainability. As Tatebe et al. (2019) have shown, this curriculum and related Ministry of Education curriculum resources pay little and superficial attention to economic inequality and, instead, focus on the neoliberal concepts of ‘financial literacy’ and ‘financial capability’, which have a strong emphasis on personal responsibility.

Curriculum and the Identity Turn in Te Mātaiaho

The neoliberal underpinnings of the recent curriculum refresh, while still present, have been more disguised by its explicit turn to identity politics under what Fraser (2017, 2019) calls ‘progressive neoliberalism’. These underpinnings can also be located more broadly in a shift from the 2007 curriculum focus on diversity and inclusion to what Hughson (2022) refers to as ‘thicker forms of justice’, including the need to decolonise and indigenise the curriculum. These imperatives embody what Fraser refers to as a progressive politics of recognition and where we trace the turn to identity in the curriculum refresh. In this section, we aim to show the relationship between the identity turn in Te Mātaiaho and the displacement of economic matters.

Led by New Zealand’s Sixth Labour Government (2017–2023), the curriculum refresh infused Te Mātaiaho with the following imperatives: giving practical effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, establishing equal status for mātauranga Māori, fostering a bicultural nationhood, addressing achievement gaps in education, and providing greater guidance over content for teachers. From the outset, it was clear that ‘identity’ would form a significant aspect of how the refreshed curriculum would enact these aims. In their initial press release, for example, Kelvin Davis and Jan Tinetti (then Minister and Associate Minister for Education) framed the curriculum refresh as one that would focus on “wellbeing, identities, language and culture” (Davis & Tinetti, 2021). This emphasis manifests in various ways in the curriculum document’s broader vision and learning areas.

The document draws its guiding philosophy from Te Tiriti o Waitangi, placing the protection of te reo Māori and mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori (equal status for Māori knowledge) as Te Mātaiaho’s central endeavour (Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 5). These aims are subsequently tied to notions of national identity by stating that “knowing who we are, where we have come from, and what makes us unique as a country” will enable a confident outlook and sense of identity (p. 8). Te Mātaiaho’s treatment of school knowledge and content further entrenches the connection to identity in various ways. At the outset of the document, for example, it is claimed that ‘knowledge streams’ help us to ‘know who we are’ (p. 8). Later, in the Purpose Statement for Learning Area English, the document states that “ākonga strengthen their identities, experiencing success in who they are and carrying a strong sense of self wherever they go” (p. 4). Similarly, in English’s ‘Big Ideas’ section, the relationship between knowledge and identity is expressed in the following manner:

Through the literatures of tangata whenua, tangata Tiriti, and those who have come from around Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, we understand where we have come from, *who we are* [emphasis added], and what it means to live in the Pacific nation of Aotearoa New Zealand. (p. 5)

This vigorous focus on identity and its putative relationship with knowledge means that the question of whether knowledge has something *more* to offer society beyond a sense of ‘who we are’ is not always strongly articulated. In its initial phase, Te Mātaiaho was informed by the need to identify important knowledge and content that all children and young people had a right to access. This impetus was captured by the idea of ‘learning that cannot be left to chance.’ However, as the refresh advanced, this edict changed to ‘learning that matters’ (Ministry of Education, 2021; see also, McPhail et al., 2023). A not insignificant shift that demonstrates how knowledge and content were reframed in terms of identity for a more politically nuanced curriculum project.

Parallel to this identity turn, there is a clear absence of references to economic matters. The adaptation of Peter Fraser’s famous quote in this curriculum document is, once again, illustrative of broader social shifts. As Te Mātaiaho’s purpose states:

every ākonga, no matter who they are, where they live, or what school they attend, can attain their highest possible standard in educational achievement (Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 13).

As can be seen, this new version forgets social class (i.e., the reference to ‘rich or poor’ of the original quote disappears), affirms the identity of the self (*who they are*), sacralises the neoliberal right to choose (*what school they attend*), no longer talks about the right to *free* education and reinforces the use of business-like language in education (*standard, educational achievement*).

The references to diversity in Te Mātaiaho, while acknowledging a broad range of identities, avoid allusions to the identitarian dimensions of social class. See for instance: “Diversity encompasses differences in age, ethnicity, culture, religion, citizen status, abilities and disabilities, family composition, and gender and sexual identity” (p. 31). The section on ‘intersectionality’ is another example of the relationship between identity politics and the omission of social class. While the document mentions several potential sources of discrimination (neurodiversity, non-English speaking backgrounds, etc.), it fails to consider students from poor or low socio-economic backgrounds (p. 18). Indeed, the use of ‘intersectionality’ as a framework of inequality is indicative of the emphasis of this document on the *effects* of discrimination rather than the *sources* of oppression, which leads to affirmative/ameliorative responses rather than transformative solutions to social justice (Fraser, 1997; Shi, 2018).

The silence around social class in its material dimension is particularly obvious in the Social Sciences and Histories curricula. Despite the emphasis of these documents on the critical analysis of the effects of colonisation, the terms ‘capitalism’, ‘social class’, and ‘neoliberalism’ are not mentioned once (as if colonisation and capitalism were two independent phenomena) (Ministry of Education, 2022; 2023). References

in these curricula to economic inequality and poverty are scarce and usually under euphemistic terms, such as scarcity and financial wellbeing (Ministry of Education, 2023). The cultural/identitarian dimension of social class is also denied in these curricula by omitting any reference to the working class as a political subject; e.g., with the omission of the history of trade unions in the country (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Even in the curriculum development process, the absence of working-class consciousness was overt. In the refreshed of English subject draft, for example, the perspectives of rural and lower socio-economic schools were underrepresented in the sector survey feedback sample on the English draft (Ministry of Education, 2023b). Across school sector survey responses ($n=188$), it was the perspectives of urban (79%) over rural (8%), which represented the dominant voice of engagement. Across all regions, responses from schools with a socio-economic decile rating within the top range (8–10) produced the majority (52%) of responses, compared with the lower range (1–3) at just 11% (McDowall et al., 2023). Participation was also limited from the wider community in public survey ($n=122$) (McDowall et al., 2023). Perhaps not surprisingly, the largest categorised respondent group in the public survey were teacher professional development providers (42%), who benefit from the status quo of a decentralised educational context, and whose interests align with those of capital and the market. Just a single respondent (1%) identifying themselves as a school student, and no respondents (0%) identifying themselves primarily as parents/whanau. Also, just 9% of public survey respondents identified as Māori (McDowall et al., 2023). The stark contrast of representation between stakeholders: those of the market, compared to those of which public education is meant to serve community (or consumer) could perhaps have signalled the need for greater outreach and engagement.

Altogether, Te Mātaiaho can be viewed in line with Fraser's (2017, 2019) progressive neoliberalism through its embracement of culture through the politics of recognition, while protecting the interests of capital. As mentioned above, we are not questioning Te Mātaiaho's aims of giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and mana ōrite (these are, indeed, desirable goals for us too). Yet, we consider Te Mātaiaho's expressed vision of addressing educational inequities via cultural identity affirmation very problematic because this vision obscures the socioeconomic roots of this and other injustices. A good example of what Martin Thrupp used to call Labour Party's 'neoliberalism with social conscience' (Thrupp & Irwin, 2010, p. xviii).

From Progressive Neoliberalism to Reactionary Neoliberalism? Latest Curriculum Developments Under the National-Led Government

The current National-led government formed in November 2023 consists of a party coalition of: centre-right National, Libertarian ACT, and right-wing populist New Zealand First. Being described by current Associate Minister David Seymour (ACT) as a "political weapon" with "quite left philosophical concepts", Te Mātaiaho became an easy target within the political rhetoric of 'culture wars' (Scott, 2023). The reactionary, neoliberal solution was that the government should have minimal role in producing a values-based curriculum. Led by Dr Michael Johnston from the libertar-

ian thinktank: The New Zealand Initiative, the recently appointed Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) for Education has advised policy shifts away from the bi-cultural efforts of the previous curriculum refresh and towards a ‘knowledge-rich curriculum’ supported by the ‘science of learning’ and ‘structured literacy’ (Ministry of Education, 2024).

Recent policy statements have recognised the existence of socioeconomic disparities reflected in the education system (see Office of the Minister of Education, 2024). This recognition, however, cannot be read as an embracement of redistribution politics, but a way to justify the meritocratic ideology of the government and its focus on education—and, therefore, the curriculum—as the “great equaliser”, in the terms of the Minister of Finance (Willis, 2024). One of the premises of the knowledge-rich curriculum, for example, is the equal-opportunity notion that all students have a right to certain forms of knowledge and content at school. This emphasis can also be interpreted as a move away from identity politics and socio-cultural theories of learning, and towards market-based cognitivist solutions for low literacy achievement, which embrace their own ideology that “all students learn to read the same” (Stanford, 2024, quoted in Walters, 2024).

While these new curricular directions draw on features of what Fraser (2017) calls ‘reactionary populism’, the national curriculum remains in service of neoliberalism with its own contradictions. This service is made visible through the embracement of one-size-fits-all cognitivist approaches to education via the ‘science of learning’ and ‘structured literacy’, together with moves towards the reintroduction of charter schools and the expansion of a deregulated and devolved state education system (Gerritsen, 2024). Despite the current (Erica Stanford) and previous (Jan Tinetti) Education Ministers agreeing “that the devolved nature of the education system has left too much up to individual schools. It forces non-expert educators to design curriculum, assessments and develop pedagogy” (Walters, 2024), curriculum’s capture across progressive and reactionary political factions perpetuate an unchallenged neoliberal hegemonic order.

Final Reflections

In this paper, we have argued that, over the last fifty years, social class has been conspicuously absent in curriculum discussion in Aotearoa New Zealand. We would like to conclude this contribution with a call for educators and educational researchers to more seriously consider class-based analysis in their work. In our view, the lack of debate around social class also reflects the status of class studies in education and the sociology of education. The sociology of education, as a field, was born of a focus on social class. It was concerned with the ‘redistribution of esteem’ (McKibbin, 1998) from the middle to the working-classes that accompanied the expansion of educational provision in social democratic societies such as Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. In the 1960s and early 1970s sociologists of education focused on the processes by which social inequality was maintained. Despite class analysis being relatively underdeveloped in Aotearoa New Zealand, these studies were also conducted by second-generation sociologists of education. Martin Thrupp was one of them. He

contributed to developing a language around class in New Zealand education and did so at a time when class was becoming passe in academic circles. Post-industrial societies were supposed to have to cast off the shackles of class, while in the midst of what Piketty (2014) calls the global ‘inequality turn’.

In the last decade, the feeling of the urgency of inequality has gathered pace. As Savage (2023) argues, our ‘now-time’ is saturated by inequality. Aotearoa New Zealand is not exempt, as Max Rashbrooke’s (2021) book *Too much money* demonstrates. We urge educators and educational researchers to engage in these debates and examine the role and impact of class in education. Such an engagement would ensure continuing the legacy of Martin’s work.

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Declarations

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