SCHOOLING SYSTEM REFORM IN AN ERA OF POST-TRUTH, FAKE NEWS, FIREHOSING, GASLIGHTING, AND ECHO CHAMBERS

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- Introduction
- Describing the contemporary public sphere
- Psychologies of connection and participation
- System reform: conversation and consultation
- Conclusion

Schooling system reform

- 30 year vision for education
- Education Work Programme
- Kōrero Mātauranga
- Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce

What psychological assumptions about civic participation underpin this approach?

The contemporary public sphere

Post-truth

Post-truth is an adjective "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief".

https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/15/post-truth-named-word-of-the-year-by-oxford-dictionaries

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Fake news

Fake news is defined as "false, often sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting". https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/02/fake-news-is-very-real-word-of-the-year-for-2017

Firehosing

Firehosing is a model of propaganda that features a "high number of channels and messages and a shameless willingness to disseminate partial truths or outright fictions. [...] It is also rapid, continuous, and repetitive, and it lacks commitment to consistency"

(Paul & Matthews, 2016, p. 1).

Gaslighting

Gaslighting uses "denial, misdirection, contradiction and falsity [in] attempts to destabilize the victim and deligitimize the victim's beliefs".

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaslighting

Echo chamber

Echo chamber is defined as "an environment, especially on a social media site, in which any statement of opinion is likely to be greeted with approval because it will only be read or heard by people who hold similar views".

https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/02/fake-news-is-very-real-word-of-the-year-for-2017

How might the ethics, mood and preoccupations of the contemporary public sphere shape the system reform agenda?

Psychologies of connection and participation

Moral psychology

... our minds were designed for groupish righteousness. We are deeply intuitive creatures whose gut feelings drive our strategic reasoning. This makes it difficult –but not impossible–to connect with those who live in other matrices, which are often built on different configurations of the available moral foundations. (Haidt, 2012, p. 318)

Social psychology

Runaway objects ... are objects that are poorly under anybody's control and have far-reaching, unexpected side effects....They seem to have a life of their own that threatens our security and safety in many ways. They are contested objects that generate opposition and controversy. They can also be powerfully emancipatory objects that open up radically new possibilities of development and well-being. (Engeström, 2008, p.227)

Political psychology

We conceive of democracy as (loosely) "popular self-government" and manipulation as (again loosely) "deceptive interference with self-government" whether individually or collectively [....] In democratic politics, manipulation takes three primary forms: lying, concealment and distraction.

(Le Cheminant & Parrish, 2011, pp. 5, 8 & 9)

Conversation and consultation

In this week's strongly-worded attack, Macleans College principal Steven Hargreaves wrote to parents and staff in the holidays to say the proposed changes would "destroy the school system in New Zealand as we know it".

The "one-size-fits-all model" failed to recognise the special character and culture of schools, and the fact they catered to their communities, he said. [Auckland Grammar School Headmaster Tim O'Connor] vowed to resist the report "at all costs".

Avondale College principal Brent Lewis said the proposal by a ministerial taskforce to give appointed regional boards all the legal responsibilities now held by elected school boards was "Stalinist".

https://i.stuff.co.nz/national/education/109533618/its-not-the-end-of-school-boards-just-a-tweak
https://i.stuff.co.nz/national/education/109192881/school-v-school-principals-push-back-against-proposals-to-neuter-competition
https://educationcentral.co.nz/big-schools-vow-to-resist-stalinist-school-bureaucracy/

Conclusion

- Traditional social democratic public sphere consultation models continue to assume commitments to rationality, fairness and objective truth in pursuit of a commonly held conception of the public good;

- The contemporary public sphere is in contrast characterized by a turn towards groupishness, subjective emotion and beliefs, and disdainful dismissal of different interests, views and information that are perceived to threaten the private good already enjoyed by the more advantaged group;

- For the schooling system to flourish, education leaders need to actively model the rights and obligations of both polity and civic participation in the public sphere.