



Faculty of Education & Social Work

Education Heresies Colloquia 2011–2012

Colloquium One: You don't know what you've got until it's gone;
moments in time for public education in Australia

Abstract: At the beginning of the twentieth century Australia was not only the land for the white man but also a social laboratory for the world, the focus for a possible experiment of 'socialism without doctrines'. And trust in public education from cradle to the gates of the university was one of the universal common faiths that had been drawn from the nineteenth century when a society of migrant settlers prevailed over indigenous peoples of an ancient land.

Now, at the commencement of the twenty-first century, as a multi-ethnic Australia stands at the edge of becoming a global quarry for Asia, we seem to trust to markets in all aspects of life. Even the very idea of public education seems to be destined to be cast into the dust bin of history as we look to individual choice to usher in change.

What have we gained and what have lost through this transformation in values? Why did we trust in public education in the first place? And what can the past still offer the future?