Education Heresies Colloquia 2011–2012

Colloquium Three: Systems failure: social inclusion as remedy or why global policies fail disengaged young people at the local level
Susan Groundwater-Smith, University of Sydney

Abstract: School retention rates appear to have an iconic status in the global world. This presentation will discuss the failure of global educational governance as an economic remedy specifically in relation to the raising of the school leaving age in Australia. It will argue that global policy-making for economic competitiveness not only “Sidelines the social purposes of education” (Ball, 2001) and is designed to exercise control over the education process but also fails to recognise the particularity of the local. To make the case two threads will be pursued, the first that the research on the returns for schooling per se, argued for by organisations such as the OECD is dogged by methodological and data problems that mean that robust results that can reliably inform education policy are unlikely to identify a common return to schooling; the second thread will draw attention to the need to identify heterogeneity in returns, particularly with reference to those young people who are currently disengaged and reluctant learners. It will draw attention to the work of Dockery (2005) who has found compulsion is adverse for non-academically able children and if it is the national desire to provide an inclusive schooling for all, up to the age of 17 years, then pathways and pedagogical practices for those young people who are expressing resistance and alienation will need to both change and be appropriately resourced.
