INVITED CONTRIBUTION

Re/imagining widening participation: A praxis-based framework

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This paper draws from a keynote I presented at the *Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia* (EPHEA) conference held in Brisbane in November 2017. In this paper, I propose the significance of a praxis-based framework for reimagining widening participation, an argument I first set out in great length in my book *The Right to Higher Education* (Burke, 2012). This praxis-based framework has underpinned the development of the *Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education* (CEEHE), based at the University of Newcastle, and the CEEHE *Australian Writing Program* (which is part of the International Writing Program), which supported the development of the papers included in this Special Issue of *International Studies in Widening Participation*.

An auto/biography of the question of equity

Reflections of my own lived experiences have helped me make sense of equity and so I will briefly share with you an analysis of my own story. It was my own experiences as a 'non-traditional' mature student, which led to my passionate commitment to equity in higher education (HE). My journey into higher education was entirely serendipitous. I had recently survived a traumatic experience of domestic violence when I happened to meet someone who told me about Access to Higher Education, the British version of the Australian Enabling programs. I am originally from Los Angeles, California, but as a young woman I found myself in a highly precarious situation, living in a women's refuge in London with a little son to support and far away from family and friends. I had spent my childhood dedicated to becoming a ballerina but I was no longer able to dance, not least because my son and I were in danger and my key priority was to keep us safe. I also desperately wanted to find a way to move forward and rebuild my life but in such a crisis situation this was challenging. I knew nothing about higher education but the Access course filled me with a sense of hope, and the opportunity transformed my life and the possibilities for my future. Having the privileged experience of meeting other mature, women students and learning from their stories of the very difficult circumstances, and of the determination and tenacity in which they fought to access higher education, led me to a passionate and lifelong commitment to the social project of developing equity in higher education.

Through my own journey as a student, I was fortunate to meet some inspiring teachers who expressed their belief in me. It was this that made me fully understand the significance of recognition, which enabled me to feel a valued and capable participant in higher education.

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Without the recognition of (informal) mentors along the way, I would not have completed my degree, or then carried on to study at Masters and then PhD level. I would certainly not have had the self-belief and courage to embrace professional challenges such as leadership in higher education. I would not be able to speak publicly at major conferences, such as EPHEA, about such complex issues as inequalities in and through educational spaces. However, my experience was built on a fragile series of opportunities and networks, dependent on meeting people along the way who were prepared to act in supportive and encouraging ways and who were willing to recognise and nurture another person's capability. Such an ethos of generosity and collaboration is at the heart of the ways we work together to create more equitable higher education spaces. However, in the increasingly competitive space of higher education, the willingness to mentor and support others, to be caring and compassionate, to understand and value difference, to be collaborative, encouraging, empathetic and generous, tends not to be at the core of the values associated with contemporary HE cultures. But they are values that are apparent within the EPHEA network and with those committed to developing equity and social justice in higher education. Such commitments drew me to the work of Paulo Freire (1970) and his concept of praxis; the compelling call to bring critical action and critical reflection together in ongoing conversation.

As well as benefitting from the recognition of those who believed in my capability, and the generosity of my mentors, I was also incredibly fortunate to benefit from the different resources available to me at that time in England; including affordable childcare and publicly funded higher education opportunities, as well as access to legal aid. These experiences have given me an intense sense of commitment to a wider project of social justice. I believe education is central in such a project and it is a great privilege to be able to work in this field. Such personal experiences helped me to understand the important inter-relationship between material *redistribution* and symbolic *recognition*, as identified by Nancy Fraser (1997) as key dimensions of social justice frameworks. I later came to understand Fraser's third and political dimension of social justice, *representation* (Fraser, 2003; 2010), which focuses attention on who participates in framing equity and widening participation policy and practice. The exclusion of whole groups and communities from this process, particularly those for whom the policy and practice is designed to serve, most often leads to *misframing*.

Understanding the significance of redistribution, recognition and representation deeply challenges individualistic discourses of meritocracy, which often misframe widening participation. Of course, in keeping with the logic of meritocracy, determination, positive thinking and working hard are important components in the commitment to realising any meaningful and worthwhile project in life. Indeed, these dispositions were instilled in me as a young dancer, yet another set of opportunities afforded to me through access to the discipline of classical ballet. However, many people work really hard but continue to be denied access to opportunities and resources, to be respected and recognised, to have a voice that is actually heard, understood and valued. Many have lots of potential and capability but never have the chance to access powerful opportunities to learn and participate in knowledge formation. These processes of marginalisation and exclusion are not only tied to concrete barriers but also to the subtle politics of recognition and *mis*recognition. My story highlights that certain mechanisms, resources and structures can be put into place that make a significant difference, such as access to high quality educational opportunities combined with encouragement, support and a strong sense of being a valued and valuable participant.

Through two decades of research and working closely with equity practitioners, I have found that Freirean-inspired praxis-based frameworks are powerful in challenging insidious inequalities. My work brings this together with other significant theories of social justice,

including Fraser's multidimensional framework, and other critical and feminist insights on formations of inequality and difference. I will show the deep and inter-dependent relationship between practice and research and the need for ongoing, reflexive, cyclical and reciprocal reflection-action-action-reflection praxis. This includes reframing not only our language but also our imagination away from deficit and remedial discourses.

Imagining equity in higher education

Due to the absence of a praxis-based framework, I argue that the policy and mainstream discourses of 'equity' tend to lack depth and clarity. Indeed, we rarely stop to discuss in detail what we mean by 'equity' and indeed what it means for wider national and institutional policies and practices. Yet, depending on how we construct the problem of equity, we will create different strategies, each of which will carry its own assumptions, values and perspectives, each of which will have different effects. The ways we give meaning to equity, shapes and constrains our imagination of *what is possible* and, indeed, *who it is possible to be*.

Equity in higher education demands that we not only lift concrete barriers but also address the historical processes in which the knowledge, experiences and cultures of some communities across the world have been marginalised and silenced, whilst others have been given prestige and status. Higher education is a key site of knowledge production. It is a space where life chances are formed and new futures are forged – at both the level of the personal and the social. It is imperative that all communities across society have access to higher education, have parity of participation – and yet, across all nations, there is inequality in patterns of access and participation in higher education, even where there has been significant investment in equity and widening participation. This raises the perplexing question – why is it that despite extensive levels of investment, inequalities continue to persist?

Current ways of imagining the future and purpose of higher education and its relationship to equity issues tends to over-emphasise economic, market-oriented, utilitarian imperatives (Jones & Thomas, 2005) as well as decontextualised and reductive notions of objective measurement and evidence (Lather, 1991). This has kept us at a superficial level and has constrained us from addressing and tackling long-standing social and cultural inequalities. Our insights emerging from years of experience and embeddedness in the field often go unnoticed largely due to the exclusion of equity practitioners from engaging in research processes and thus participating in knowledge production (Burke, 2012). The detaching of the rich field of academic research on social inequalities and its relationship to educational exclusions separates such insights from the development of practice and this, in turn, undermines opportunities to make a difference. My argument is: if we are to develop more powerful strategies to build equity in higher education, we require a praxis-based approach that brings together academic researchers with equity practitioners to enrich our understanding across these domains. Such strategies are further deepened by engaging Pedagogical Methodologies (Burke, Crozier & Misiaszek, 2017), that bring together multiple and diverse perspectives through collaborative approaches that recognise difference, striving towards parity of participation.

In my own journey of developing praxis-based approaches, Jane Miller's (1995) concept of the auto/biography of the question has been particularly fruitful. Jane was an inspiring tutor on my Masters programme and she was dedicated to bringing together research and practice. She developed this concept of the autobiography of the question so that practitioners could find their way into what is an often esoteric and elitist academic field – to make connections with research and theory but at the same time to strongly bring in their own voice, knowledge, experience and insight. Jane believes we are all theorists – and this is so important to recognise. We make sense

of the world through our interpretations and the life experiences that bring meaning to our work and practice – we do things in a particular way because we have a theory about doing things in that way – even when this is not made explicit.

> Beginning with the story of [her] own interest in the question [she] is asking and planning to research into. From that initial story she may move towards the mapping of her developing sense of the question's interest for [her] onto the history of more public kinds of attention to it. This becomes a way of historicising the questions [she is] addressing and of setting [her] life and educational history within contexts more capacious than [her] own. Theory becomes theories; historically contrived to address or explain particular questions; and *we are all theorists*. (Miller, 1997, p. 4 quoted in Burke, 2002, p. 5, emphasis added)

We are also all re-searchers – we search for meaning through our human capacity to reflect and this shapes our doing in the world. It is the way that we imagine a problem that constructs the way we approach the problem. That premise can create possibility – open up creativity – but often it can also do the opposite – close down possibility – reduce or misframe the questions we ask and the solutions we identify. This is because our personal imagination is always profoundly shaped by wider social and institutional discourses.

Discourses are the ways we make meaning in the world, they are the intertwining of power/knowledge through which meaning is generated and reproduced (Foucault, 1977). Discourses can become powerful regimes of truth, sometimes leading us to believe that there is no alternative. I want us to consider how we imagine equity through particular regimes of truth – but also to draw on our remarkable capacity to re-imagine and to dream other ways of being and doing.

There is no one truth but many contested truths, some of which have dominance whilst others are marginalised. This is an important point as we tend to fix our attention on particular assumptions and we also tend to reduce complex problems to often crude analyses. This is partly because we want to find solutions and this sometimes unhelpfully invests us in a quick-fix or tick-box kind of logic or the reassertion of our assumptions rather than the interrogation of what we take for granted. Unfortunately, this only keeps us at the surface of the deeply-entrenched issues entangled in social and cultural inequalities and this perpetuates institutional complicity in the reproduction of educational inequalties. This is why I argue that we need to go beyond *counting* to a deeper sense of *accountability* that is embedded in an ethical framework and that brings attention, especially for those of us in positions of institutional power, to our personal and collective responsibility for developing equitable frameworks in and through higher education.

Towards reimagining equity through praxis

We need to create the time and space to rethink and to reconstruct the discourses that shape what we do and how we do it and with what effects. We need to work together as a collective with a shared commitment to equity and widening participation in higher education, whilst recognising and valuing contestation and difference. Collaboration is thus essential, challenging the competitive cultures that undermine equity work. However, there are multiple constraints that we all face – increasingly pressurised funding and resources, the age of performativity driven by particular notions of individual productivity (Ball, 2012), the ways higher education tends to be outcome driven rather than process oriented, and short term focused rather than supportive of an enduring commitment to equity – as well as the inequalities we ourselves encounter as equity

practitioners often working at the margins of our institutions and the ongoing challenge of legitimising the transformative, social justice work we are committed to.

In this context, I set out a praxis-based framework to illuminate the power of dialogical, reciprocal, cyclical and participatory reframings of equity (Burke, 2002; 2012; Burke et al., 2017). Equity work is deeply relational; we cannot create educational transformation without working together across our different contexts, disciplines, experiences, knowledge and expertise.

In our reimaginings and our journey towards praxis, I suggest we draw from the body of work that gives us a language of hope and of care (Freire, 2009). However, I acknowledge the difficulties of drawing on such language in an age of performativity in which all that we are is being measured and assessed (Ball, 2012). This can be experienced as profoundly dehumanising (Freire, 1970). There is an increasing attempt to measure emotional disposition as well as the more conventional skills associated with human capital theory. Our desires and our motivational and aspirational dispositions are thus now being subjected to often colonising, dehumanising technologies of measurement, assessment and evaluation. Equity work in all of its diversity becomes coerced into a narrow framework to produce human capital that not only measures a person's worth in terms of skills and competencies but exacerbates this narrowing of human experience to problematic judgements about a person's affective value as aspirational, motivational and future-oriented subjects.

Pedagogies of hope and care – against shaming

The language of hope and care is often excluded from the discourses of HE institutions and I have argued that this is deeply connected to the marginalisation of certain bodies of knowledge and certain bodies of people (Burke, 2017). For example, the marginalisation of those dispositions associated with femininity – such as being caring or being soft – has become increasingly insidious. Being seen as too soft or too caring is often entangled in anxieties about lowering of standards, which is itself often associated with equity policies. I have included some quotes from lecturers in HE to illustrate my point. This draws from the Formations of Gender and Higher Education Pedagogies project, funded by the UK's Higher Education Academy (Burke et al., 2013). Although both quotes are from male lecturers, it should be noted that the anxieties expressed below are echoed in many of the female lecturers' accounts.

> I feel because of retention rates and all these systems which are in place…I am expected to be caring, more caring than I actually want to be. (White male lecturer in Burke, 2017)

> I understand we have, to some extent, to spoon-feed them for the first year…but I feel that if I have to continue with that in the second and third year, I feel I am not doing my job as a lecturer. (White male lecturer in Burke, 2017)

Caring practices are often perceived as attached to inappropriate feminised, maternalistic subjectivities that contribute to the 'dumbing down' of HE. This not only constructs students from historically under-represented backgrounds as 'childlike', passive and dependent – and thus out of place in HE – but also legitimises forms of educational practice associated with 'hard' and 'tough' dispositions. This works powerfully to implicitly denigrate those dispositions associated with femininity precisely at a moment when more women than ever before are gaining access to HE. It also tends to marginalise the exceptional educational practice of many practitioners who are committed to supporting their students to develop a sense of capability,

challenging remedial, paternalistic approaches and developing educational relations built on trust, care, compassion and recognition.

My research has examined how misrecognition works in higher educational contexts to subtly reproduce inequalities through shame and shaming, which is connected to individualism, performativity and the cultures of prestige asserted through league tables and discourses of excellence. Shame is hidden through discursive manoeuvres that locate the problem of educational participation in the individual. 'Failure' and 'success' are erroneously constructed as about the individual, through judgements about a person's lack of capability, motivation, aspiration, confidence and resilience. Such judgements are made against subjective notions about what educational participation entails and what a university participant 'is'.

Although discourses of equity focus on the importance of developing practices that enhance students' sense of 'belonging' and 'connection', shame exacerbates feelings of *not* belonging and disconnection as well as sensibilities of unworthiness. Richard Erskine (1995) elaborates: "Shame is most importantly a felt sense of unworthiness to be in connection … with the ongoing awareness of how very much one wants to connect with others" (p. 3). Scheff (2014) explains that shame is a "signal of disconnect, alienation" and "relationships in modern societies strongly tend toward alienation, and therefore to the ubiquity of shame" (p. 132). As a form of profound misrecognition, shame is internalised as a feeling of lack of self-worth or sense of failure (Raphael Reed, Croudace, Harrison, Baxter & Last, 2007).

Shame and shaming underlie embodied and everyday experiences of inequality and exclusion, which are difficult to name and to speak. Shame is largely veiled by mainstream discourses such as 'inclusion', which appear to be benevolent but are reproductive of inequalities through placing the weight of responsibility for overcoming social disadvantage on the individual who suffers that social disadvantage. The discourse of 'inclusion' coerces those seen as 'excluded' to conform to the conventions, expectations and values of dominant cultures and practices. Projects of social transformation for greater social equity become individual projects of self-transformation in order to fit into the dominant framework. This might include, for example, becoming 'flexible' and 'adaptable' to volatile market conditions and thus being recognised as an appropriately 'resilient' HE participant, regardless of the differential resources, opportunities and recognition available to different students.

Discourses of success operate in a context in which excellence is increasingly the object of desire. Universities aspire to be 'world-class', competing for the 'best' students and staff in a stratified market driven by league table rankings. In such a highly individualised, competitive framework, new forms of intensified managerialism are brought to work to standardise, systematise and neutralise difference. Misrecognition is not only about student equity in higher education but is also relevant to the experiences of staff. Equity practitioners tend to work on the periphery of universities, in separate centres, and outside of academic faculties and departments. In my research exploring the experiences of equity practitioners in the UK, I found narratives of struggling to find authority, status and recognition for the important widening participation work being undertaken on behalf of the institution (see Burke, 2012).

Jones and Thomas (2005) argue that widening participation activities tend to be detached from the main work of universities and have "little or no impact on institutional structure and culture" (p. 617). If Jones and Thomas (2005) are correct that most equity work takes place at the margins of universities, what are the possibilities for deep-seated patterns of educational inequality and exclusion to be shifted, disrupted and challenged? Research uncovers that locating equity units

at the peripheries of higher education and failing to ensure that equity strategies and initiatives are research-informed – and, likewise, academic research is practice-informed – often has the unfortunate effect of reproducing inequalities (Burke, 2012). Creating equitable higher education is often seen as someone else's responsibility, as outside the core work underpinning education, such as pedagogical practices. Furthermore, academic research on equity and social justice and equity practitioner knowledge are separated rather than brought together in dialogue to co-produce and deepen understanding about the complex processes by which inequalities are reproduced through our taken-for-granted practices. This often means that the knowledge emerging from equity practice is not fully recognised, valued and disseminated. As a result, there is fragmentation and individualisation of what should be a collective, institutional and community-wide commitment to creating equity in and through higher education. Detaching equity from the main work of the university fails to embed an ethos of equity and social justice into the structures, practices and values of the university, at best framing equity in tokenistic and superficial ways. At worst it leads to the reproduction of pathologising constructions of those groups associated with policies of access, equity and widening participation (both staff and students).

Beyond evidence-based discourses to praxis

Increasingly, we are concerned to develop 'evidence-based' policy, however, evidence-based frameworks have been extensively critiqued as embedded in an objectifying, paternalistic and/or colonising set of technologies that work to construct 'the disadvantaged' in pathologising ways (Said, 1977; Collins, 1990; Mirza, 2013) that regulate and discipline our imaginations of who is seen as having the right to higher education. 'Evidence' emphasises generalisability and objectivity, with a strong focus on the tangible, observable and measurable. We do need evidence to show that equity work matters but within a broader praxis-based framework that captures the ways social and cultural inequalities are often *unwittingly reproduced* through taken-for-granted assumptions. This is often referred to as 'unconscious bias'. It is important for individuals to exercise self-reflexivity in ways that raise awareness about how unconscious bias feeds into problematic deficit language and the exercise of judgments of others that lead to exclusion. Those with the institutional authority to judge and assess are often deeply entrenched in the taken-for-granted constructions of potential and capability within particular professional and/or disciplinary fields of practice. *However, individual awareness of unconscious bias on its own is not going to create transformational change.* This must always be combined with the transformation of institutional structures, policies, discourses and cultures aiming to create equitable spaces and practice that address questions of difference as well as ensuring that opportunities and resources are equitably distributed.

Praxis – that is the bringing together of critical reflection and action – is crucial in creating such transformative possibilities. We need to develop practice in dialogue with research to ensure that those taken-for-granted meanings that unwittingly perpetuate inequalities are challenged and eradicated at both the individual and institutional levels. Similarly, we need practice-informed research to ensure that research is grounded in the issues, challenges and dilemmas confronting practice and that the insights and knowledge of practitioners deeply informs research. Through this cycle of praxis we are enabled to create more refined, sensitive and nuanced strategies for equity in and through higher education.

In relation to such aims for fine-tuning our approaches to research and evaluation and in connection with social justice imperatives, the *Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education* (CEEHE) has developed a praxis-based, pedagogical methodology (Burke et al., 2017; Burke & Lumb, 2018). The aim is to create parity of participation, underpinned by a

commitment to difference, engaging participants in processes of collaborative meaning-making. Such approaches create opportunities for refusal, resistance, and doing things differently, provoking our pedagogical imaginations. However, this endeavour must always recognise that striving for parity of participation is ongoing, requiring deep and critical reflexivity and the recognition that power relations will always shape our experiences and subjectivities.

Praxis-based frameworks aim to ensure that all participants engaged in the research/practice nexus, and indeed all working in higher education, have access to the theoretical, methodological and conceptual tools and resources that enable the complexity of inequalities to be illuminated and examined, as well as then translated for practice and 'making a difference'. A praxis-based framework brings all participants together in dialogue across research and practice and opens up pedagogical spaces to deepen levels of understanding from multiple and contested perspectives and dimensions.

> In PM [pedagogical methodological] frameworks, research *becomes* a form of pedagogy, as part of the process of meaning-making, learning and making sense of ourselves and our relation to others. This engages research participants in relational processes in which we, as the researchers, learn and in which the participants in our study also have opportunities to learn; this ultimately is manifested in the way the research is iteratively understood, and how it is shaped/formed/developed. (Burke et al., 2017, p. 53, original emphasis)

CEEHE has developed a praxis-based framework that seeks to harness the insights of academic research to inspire a reimagining of equity and widening participation. We have developed a number of projects and initiatives in relation to this, one of which was funded by the *National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education* (NCSEHE) and titled *Capability, Belonging and Equity in Higher Education* (Burke, Bennett, Burgess, Gray & Southgate, 2016). The aim of this project was to interrogate constructions of deficit while developing a detailed understanding of the ways that discourses of capability might shape feelings of self-confidence and belonging in the process of becoming a university student. The study found that students from under-represented backgrounds who have gained access to higher education still struggle with their sense of capability, which is often perceived through the lens of genetics rather than understood in terms of the unequal access to a range of resources, networks and educational opportunities that enables capability to be developed or not. As part of our praxis-based approach, we have drawn on our research to provide cutting edge professional development resources (www.equityhe.com). This suite of conceptual 'think piece' films opens up time and space for deep engagement with complex questions of equity and widening participation, with the aim to stimulate rich and reflexive conversations about how inequalities *feel*. Through these think pieces, we aim to provide accessible and high quality resources that create *communities of praxis* in which we engage with meaningful dialogue about the challenges we face in our equity work.

CEEHE has also developed the [Australian Writing Program for Equity and Widening Participation Practitioners](#), which aims to bring participants together across academic research, policy and equity practitioner communities. This is part of a wider international collaboration with colleagues in the UK (Professor Jacqueline Stevenson, Sheffield Hallam University and Rae Tooth, *Office for Students*), who have developed a similar program in England. The CEEHE program aims to break down problematic divisions that legitimise some bodies of people and some bodies of knowledge and not others by working across research-evaluation-theory-policy-practice and holding these together in cyclical, reciprocal and ethical frameworks of collaborative exchange. The praxis-based structure is one of redistribution, recognition and

representation, so that resources are redistributed, equity practitioner knowledge is recognised and different perspectives are represented to reframe questions of equity and to strive towards parity of participation. The program involves individual equity practitioners developing a research and writing project in a community of praxis context with the support of academic and peer mentors. This has created a nation-wide community of praxis that also extends to collaborations in the UK. It draws together the knowledge and expertise of Australian equity practitioners and academic researchers (and is now sponsored by EPHEA). This program has been facilitated by CEEHE in collaboration with mentors from across the country.

Final reflections

Equity is necessarily a long-term project that requires critical dialogue across research, evaluation, theory, policy and practice. Building equitable higher education is imperative to all our futures – growing inequality poses a threat to all of us on multiple levels and higher education has a key role to play in ensuring more socially just and thus peaceful and stable societies into the future. The power of higher education is immeasurable and profound.

Universities thus need to be courageous in meaningfully engaging the project of equity within praxis-based frameworks in which participants "become aware of their own distrust, fears and needs in ways that lead them to change themselves" (Barnett, 2011, p. 675). This requires that we acknowledge the partial nature of knowledge, including knowledge of ourselves and our practices (Ellsworth, 1992). Indeed, fully knowing ourselves is always impossible. Similarly, knowledge of the 'other' is fraught with the politics of mis/recognition. This points to the problematic nature of exercising self-reflexivity as well as other forms of critical consciousness-raising. However, acknowledging that such orientations are problematic and necessarily partial is an important dimension of developing HE spaces that re/imagine equity and widening participation and thus take on more sophisticated orientation to questions of power, inequality and difference.

Such reimagining helps to nuance our understanding of equity as related to complex power relations, in which power is exercised rather than 'had', disrupting divisions that imagine equity in binary terms: rational/emotional, independent/dependent, active/passive, powerful/powerless and so forth. This involves the study of "human identity/s in all their anxieties, vulnerabilities, and im/possibility/s wherever they may be" searching together for "an opportunity to resist the forces that stop us from re-imagining more worlds" (Chawla & Rodriguez, 2007, p. 707). This also helps to examine how the emotional profoundly shapes educational experiences, including experiences of fear and shame. It helps us to re/imagine equity not as a problem to be regulated for processes of standardisation and homogenisation but, rather, as a critical resource to reflexively redevelop collective and ethical forms of participation in, through and beyond higher education. Such collective participation is not based on a notion that we can overcome power relations, but an understanding that power is complex and fluid and an inevitable dimension of pedagogical and social relations in which difference is and should be part of the dynamics through which we create meaning and understanding.

CEEHE is committed to developing praxis-based approaches that are underpinned by principles of redistribution, recognition and representation – developing parity of participation across and within different communities. It aims to open up the time, space and resources to collectively grapple with and tackle deeply embedded and complex inequalities. Our work is dedicated to developing a deep inter-relationship between research, theory and practice with the aim of creating more equitable social and cultural spaces and relations. The power of our imaginations in creating real possibilities must not be underestimated. This project requires that we work

collaboratively together across our different contexts, knowledges, challenges and commitments to build a more equitable higher education landscape.

Dedication

I dedicate this paper to three inspirational communities of praxis: the *Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia* (EPHEA) network, the International Writing Program participants and the *Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education* (CEEHE) team. I would also like to dedicate this to my many colleagues, friends and mentors in the UK who have helped shape my thinking about these issues over the past two decades.

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