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Modernizing the Australian education workplace: a case of failure to deliver for teachers of young disadvantaged adolescents

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Abstract

This article has at its centre the project, discourses and practices of modernization and what these mean practically and existentially for schools. The author argues that schools are, at their core, relational organizations, therefore they are primarily concerned with creating the set of relational resources and conditions that enable learning to take place, among students as well as teachers. When this does not happen, for whatever reasons, schools are very dysfunctional, deeply disturbed and unhappy places. An instance is described of an Australian government school that courageously, and in a politically prudent way, created the space within which to construct a viable relationally-affirming alternative. It is a story about how a school found ways of working against the damaging and prevailing managerialist ethos, and devised ways of uniquely

re-inventing and reforming itself against/in spite of the external dominant official reform agenda.

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