

Author/Autor: Blackmore, Jill (jillb@deakin.edu.au). Deakin University, Australia

Title/Título: The Rise of the Phoenix: Parent activism and educational aspirations in a Victorian urban community

El resurgir del Fénix: Activismo de los padres y aspiraciones educativas en una comunidad urbana Victoriana

Topic: Parents as educators, their challenging role and current status in school, family and community relationships

Los padres y madres como educadores, los retos de su rol y su situación actual en las relaciones que se establecen entre las familias, los centros docentes y las entidades y servicios sociales comunitarios

Presentation time/Día de presentación: Session in English. Friday, 16, 10:15-11:45 a.m. Room 1, Third Floor

Sesión en Inglés. Viernes 16, 10:45-11:45 a.m. Sala 1, Tercer Piso

Abstract

This paper explores the play between parent activism and educational aspirations in one Victorian school community over a ten year period in which parents opposed the closure of an inner city secondary school in a centralised system of educational governance and then lobbied seven years for its re-establishment in what was now a market oriented system resulting from radical neoliberal reforms. The narratives of the parents of the new school are recounted, tracking their educational ideas, aspirations and expectations with the first intake of students in 2004. This case study explores the multiple narratives and conflicting discourses of community mobilised by neoliberal reforms based on choice, and the rise of middle class parental aspirations in Victoria. The data is from the first stages of a longitudinal study involving interviews and observations with the planning committee, principal, teachers, parents, and students. The researcher is both participant and observer, having been active as a feminist academic opposing self management during the 1990s, as president of the local primary school council and as a member of the planning committee and first school council. The paper and project draw from notions of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), feminist theories of social justice (e.g. Fraser, 1997) and educational debates around notions of parental involvement and community.