

Rick's facilitation notes

10.00 – 11.15am: **In Macksville where do people learn:**

- to get paid work
- speak out and/or be actively involved in researching and addressing issues and challenges
- enhance their physical and mental health
- pursue interests and build relationships.

In other words, where does learning for community capacity building in Macksville take place?

The purpose of this session is to draw attention to learning as opposed to formal course provision and that can lay the groundwork for a deeper notion of a learning community. Where do people in Nambucca learn skills and knowledge to:

- get paid work?
- be active citizens?
- strengthen their wellbeing?
- pursue interests and build relationships?

Are sporting clubs sites of learning, are churches sites of learning, voluntary schemes and environmental campaigns? What connections exist between schools, libraries, vocational, higher and community education? Is there a role for businesses, tourism, and cultural institutions in facilitating a learning community? Can learning contribute to a healthy community? Are older, indigenous and immigrant people provided for? How can exchange and co-operation be facilitated?

We might distinguish between informal and formal education and learning that builds individual capacity and collective capacity.

Using scraps of paper we might name sites of learning in Nambucca and produce four separate maps about where people in Nambucca learn skills and knowledge to:

- get paid work?
- be active citizens?
- strengthen their wellbeing?
- pursue interests and build relationships?

We will de-brief and analyse the maps We understand that what you are interested in via the Nambucca community leadership project is....

How can residents (young people and adults) be supported and learn to investigate, plan and take action to improve Nambucca?

This question can be posed in other ways – how can community capacity, local democracy and active citizenship in Nambucca be strengthened or how can people’s capacity to exercise community leadership for Nambucca be supported? Do the draft maps of education and learning in Nambucca suggest that more is known about education and training to help individuals get paid work and less is known about education for active citizenship? One purpose of this workshop can be to identify, describe and marshal tapped and untapped resources.

Would it be possible to headhunt or issue an open invitation to presenters from the community and cover the range of questions listed below?

HANDOUT

- Where is the ‘voice’ of the people in Nambucca?
- Who are the ‘people’ of Nambucca? How united or divided is the ‘community’? To what extent do various parts of the community have different or common views about the challenges facing Nambucca; be they retired, commuters, unemployed, alternative ‘lifestylers,’ active members of religious groups, and others?
- How many libraries are there in Nambucca and what potential do they have to support local community action initiatives?
- What opportunities do school children get to investigate, plan and take action on issues and challenges particular to Nambucca?
- Are there resident action groups in Nambucca?
- How many community service groups (eg. Rotary, Lions, Apex) are there in Nambucca and do they want more ideas and resources to support active citizenship?
- How many elected community management boards are there in Nambucca?
- What role do and can churches play in fostering active citizenship?
- Are, or could, arts and cultural groups be engaged in community action?

- How many community development agencies are there in Nambucca and do they want more ideas and resources to support active citizenship?
- Who engages those who are most fragile and vulnerable?

11.45 – 1.00pm:

Needs-based versus strengths-based education

- Banking education and popular education
- Community-based learning and research possibilities in Macksville
- Popular education in Macksville

I will explain why I do not like the notion of ‘needs.’ In a conventional needs-based planning approach to development people are seen as ‘in need.’ For example, they have a problem of obesity and they ‘need’ better diets and more physical activities. Or they are seen as lacking required skills and they ‘need’ training. This is a deficit approach that is often accompanied by issue specific or sector specific strategies. So, the education department delivers training programs and health authorities deliver nutrition programs... more often than not in isolation from each other.

In a community capacity building approach people are seen as having talents, resources, aspirations that are positive. The community capacity building practitioner so the theory goes.... does not see themselves as an expert whose job is to identify and articulate needs.... but more that of a facilitator whose job is to help people identify and articulate their ideas, their aspirations and the resources they already have and any additional resources they may need.

How often have we heard stories of communities being besieged by researchers, consultants and planners armed with clipboards and butchers paper who identify needs, go away, and make recommendations that seem far removed from the local reality? These are stories of disempowerment. Compare this to a community capacity building strategy where the many government agencies work together rather than separately. Compare the exercise of writing up on butchers paper a long list of the community’s needs or deficiencies to a community capacity mapping exercise..... an exercise where people are asked to think out of the square to affirm things they may have taken for granted.... An exercise where they are supported to map the community’s capacities.

Lead a discussion about what experiences they have had in Nambucca... are they familiar with its 'deficits' with its 'strengths'

Lead a discussion about the Nambucca Men's Shed.... Is that an example of a strengths-based approach?

This is all very well but how do you do it?....ie strengths-based planning... community capacity building.... I think that practitioners and planners under-estimate the complexity of community capacity building practice. I get impatient when I read many accounts of community capacity building practice. I find many accounts are descriptive and not analytical. The accounts describe the goals but rarely do I find critical discussions about how difficult it was to include and mobilise a wide range of stakeholders in goal setting. Getting people involved, let alone to take control and responsibility is, never easy. Many accounts of community capacity building practice go on to describe how meetings were convened, committees formed, and plans agreed to. But rarely do I learn about the nitty gritty details of how effective these meetings and committees were. Who came to the meetings? Who actively participated in the meetings? Who, if anybody, shifted from an apathetic and despondent attitude to a buoyant and confident attitude? What were the contesting models or ideas about development? Whose interests prevailed? How were differences negotiated and respected?

I think part of the reason for the lack of analysis is that there is a widespread taken-for-granted assumption that community capacity building practice is essentially about being a good meeting organiser. I know, I'm probably being simplistic.... But I reckon if one did a survey of community capacity building projects that over 75% would follow what I am going to call a staid, conservative and formulaic procedure. It goes something like this..... (a) establish some sort of action group or local committee; (b) convene some sort of workshop planning process – Search planning workshops, Community Opportunity workshops etc. ; (c) organise follow-up meetings to continue the planning and make decisions about implementation; (d) establish and seek agreement on management arrangements with some sort of secretariat.

I wonder how many practitioners consider alternative ways of devising and implementing community capacity building strategies. Where is the research to provide us with evidence about

how effective the various strategies are? Where is the research to give us evidence about *who* participates in particular community capacity building efforts? To my knowledge, there has not been a lot of research about the practice of community capacity building. There has been much more about what it is, and how to measure it. Therefore, I make the following comments and suggestions cautiously.

I suspect that meeting-based / workshop-based practices are not effective because they are:

- not inclusive. Fran Baum and Robert Bush have been researching aspects of civic participation and governance in community capacity building. They argue that working class people are not being represented in the usual types of consultation forums – namely meetings, workshops and committees. There are people who like meetings and committees but there are probably more that don't. A challenge is to engage those who don't.
- not pluralist. They employ a one-size fits all approach rather than responding to different ways people like to learn, plan, make decisions and work together.
- Not experiential and rarely provide opportunities for learning by doing. Meetings and workshops are overwhelmingly cognitive. They are often quite didactic. If people are going to learn to take charge of their future, the way they learn should mirror that. I don't think workshops and meetings, even those that are interactive, do mirror a participatory way of working. They are inevitably dominated by a small number of individuals.

Here are some ideas for alternative strategies.

Imagine the ways a local newspaper might:

- engage different groups in the community
- get them expressing views about a community's history and future, generate lots of discussion and debate
- make individuals and groups feel important because their ideas are published
- create opportunities to commission and support local people to research community capacity building issues.

To do this, I imagine a local newspaper giving column spaces to not just local dignitaries but also to those whose voices are often not heard – eg. early school leavers. It wouldn't be much good if all they did was make the column space available. The newspaper would have to think of ways to actively support people to write columns. The newspaper could work collaboratively with people or groups in the community to research and prepare stories.

Imagine if a local community capacity building group chose to invest funds in a community film project. Imagine finding and commissioning some film-makers who over a period of six to twelve months didn't make a film about the history and future of the community, but instead collaborated with various stakeholder groups and supported them to make the film. I am not talking about a local steering committee overseeing the film-makers. I am envisaging a process where members of the Aboriginal community get an opportunity to work hands-on.... researching, scripting, editing, acting, and dubbing in the making of part of the film. Likewise, shopkeepers, nurses, juvenile offenders might engage in a similar hands-on collaborative film-making process. Imagine the thinking and discussion that would have to go on among these people to research and make the film. Imagine if the film-makers were not just good facilitators but also good at their craft.... and the film turned out to be 'good'.... not a dull documentary. It could be launched and shown in town and at other places. Imagine the pride and sense of achievement that might be generated by this.

Let me highlight features of these proposed strategies. They are seeking to create opportunities for people to be actively engaged rather than passively engaged... by giving them the responsibility to research and devise capacity building strategies for themselves. They are shaped by an explicit commitment to work with people whose voices are not usually heard. The strategies are shaped by an assumption that the deepest challenge in, and a pre-requisite for inclusive, community capacity building is to bring about a change in mindset. In one sense it's easy to do community capacity building work with successful business people, experienced local government officials.... people who do already feel they are in charge of their community's future. It's much harder working with people who feel relatively powerless to influence change... the sort of people who put themselves down saying they are not

important, they're not clever, successful etc. To help such people shift by seeing themselves not as objects of change but as agents of change is the greatest challenge in community capacity building.

In this respect I think artists and community educators can make valuable contributions to community capacity building. Artists can help people map their communities, research and tell their histories, and convey their possible futures, in ways that are creative, engaging, dynamic and inclusive. Community educators can help devise strategies for learning and planning beyond meetings and workshops.

Lead an exercise.... where in small groups... they plan or report on existing initiatives with the following features:

Local people are actively involved in identifying and defining issues and challenges

Where their 'voice' is being either exhibited, performed, published, broadcast, filmed ...

Where their stories and experiences form the content and substance of the projects or programs....

MAKE HANDOUT

2.00 – 3.00pm:

Education for social capital in Macksville

- What is social capital?
- How can it be strengthened in Macksville?
- What role do educators have to strengthen social capital?

Distribute the handout with my social capital indicators ... talk to it... and then ask them in small groups to....

- (a) name some initiatives that strengthen social capital as defined by the indicators and to explain briefly how those initiatives build social capital ...
- (b) describe and discuss what sort of support those initiatives might need to help them even more intensively strengthen social capital...

SOCIAL CAPITAL IN NAMBUCCA

Indicators prepared by Rick Flowers, Centre
for Popular Education UTS, 2004

Could you use these indicators to 'measure'
social capital in Nambucca?

Can you name some initiatives that strengthen
social capital as defined by the indicators and
explain briefly how those initiatives build
social capital?

Can you describe and discuss what sort of
support those initiatives might need to help
them even more intensively strengthen social
capital? What can schools, learning circles,
TAFE, ACE and other educational providers
do to strengthen social capital?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Community engagement is measured by the degree to which people and groups are investing time and energy in project initiatives

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<p>Passive engagement; stakeholders are involved in a tokenistic or superficial manner. Their interest is low and demonstrated by brief attention spans and attendance.</p>	<p>Episodic engagement; stakeholders appear either indifferent or are only occasionally active in project activities but do participate.</p>	<p>Deep engagement; stakeholders are energetic, enthusiastic, active and volunteering to do more.</p>

ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS WHO EXPERIENCE SOCIAL EXCLUSION

It's easy to engage successful business people, experienced local government officials; people who do already feel they are in charge of their community's future. It's much harder working with people who feel relatively powerless to influence change.

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<p>Socially excluded groups do not participate in project activities. Project activity is perceived to be largely of interest to one or two dominant groups.</p>	<p>A small number of socially excluded groups participate in project activities. Some inclusion of others' cultures by reference to their existence and perhaps some activities based on their interests.</p>	<p>A large number of socially excluded groups participate in project activities. Diverse community groups, including those who have experienced social exclusion, experience a strong sense of their community, identity and pride. Diverse cultures are explicitly valued in the content and process of the project activities.</p>

BONDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

A 'strong' community is measured not only by its material wealth, but by the ability and willingness of its members to pitch in together, and support bottom-up initiatives.

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<p>Project organising groups struggle to recruit volunteers willing to get involved in planning and management of activities. People show little care or concern for others outside their immediate families. They are more interested in receiving than initiating projects (ie. welfare mentality).</p>	<p>Willingness to help out with planning and management of projects is sporadic. For short periods of time, group memberships are high and people applaud festival initiatives.</p>	<p>There is never a shortage of volunteers able to plan and manage project activities. Many people are committed and determined to initiate local solutions to local problems.</p>

COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY AND PRIDE

Community and culture may be defined by class, sexuality, gender, disability, occupation, ethnicity, religion and place.

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<p>Because of the project people feel subjugated and alienated.</p> <p>They feel shame and embarrassment about their place, histories and culture.</p>	<p>Despite the project people are not sure about which places and cultures to identify with. They have ambiguous feelings about their place, history and culture. They profess not to be interested in history or culture.</p>	<p>Because of the project people feel stronger and securer about their place, identity and culture. They are prouder of their histories and of their community.</p>

BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL

It is one thing to have vibrant community groups and people willing to pitch in. It is another to have exchange and interaction between the various groups. It is possible to have high bonding social capital in various parts of Nambucca. But groups from those different parts may mistrust each other.

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<p>Despite the project, the community is deeply fragmented and factionalised. A sense of community is defined less by 'place' and more by ethnicity, language, religion, age, sexuality or interest. Conflict is common between various groups and factions within groups.</p>	<p>Because of the project, there is more tolerance and respect for and between the diverse groups in the community. But there is still a widespread feeling of 'us' and 'them' between many groups. There is widespread perception that there is a 'mainstream' community and that there are 'peripheral' communities.</p>	<p>While there are communities defined by interest, culture, religion, work etc. they are united in a shared desire to improve health for all in Nambucca. There is significant trust, and high levels of exchange, sharing and co-operation between various groups. Not only is there tolerance and respect for different groups, there is also considerable empathy.</p>

TECHNICAL AND FUNCTIONAL CHANGE AND LEARNING

This refers to the learning of technical and functional skills and knowledge.

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<p>Stakeholders who participated in the project activities miss out on opportunities to gain specific, functional skills.</p>	<p>Stakeholders who participated in the project activities gain some useful technical knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>Stakeholders who participated in the project activities gain skills and knowledge that enable them to successfully get work.</p>

INTERPRETIVE CHANGE AND LEARNING

This refers to gaining knowledge and understanding of other people's views and analyses. This sort of knowledge is often acquired in meetings and workshops and by reading.

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Despite the project stakeholders learn nothing new about other people and gain no new appreciation and empathy for other residents.	Because of the project stakeholders gain insights into the experiences of other people and groups. They gain some new knowledge about issues, challenges and community action initiatives.	Because of the project stakeholders win deeper and new insights and knowledge of issues, challenges and community action initiatives. They gain more understanding of the perspectives of other people and groups. They learn more tolerance and compassion.

TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE AND LEARNING

This refers to that change when people who previously had low self-efficacy believe in the value of their own knowledge and ability to change their circumstances. It also refers to that transformative change when powerful people are questioned about their domineering and excluding behaviours.

Despite the project people seem to be resigned to the way things are, even in the face of things that make them unhappy. They do not question the status quo. They do not question others who show disrespect to them. They do not question inequalities, social exclusion and apathy. They believe they do not have the necessary qualities, skills and knowledge to be 'enterprising.'	Because of the project people begin to name things that make them unhappy. In particular, they begin to name challenges and issues in their community. They question what they perceive as injustice. They imagine the possibilities of being enterprising and of change for the better in themselves and their communities.	Because of the project people assert that their knowledge is as valuable as 'expert' knowledge. They question taken-for-granted assumptions about many social issues. Powerful people seek to include previously excluded people in analyses and actions. People see themselves as 'enterprising' and sufficiently powerful to make change.
--	--	---

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

This refers to people's willingness and capacity to exercise leadership and develop projects; ie. to research and offer their own analyses of challenges and issues and then to plan and pursue actions.

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
There is a tendency to depend on others, especially figures of authority, to not act on challenges and issues.	Individuals and groups are interested in supporting various festival initiatives and activities. They actively seek opportunities to make their voice heard and convey their ideas.	Individuals and groups actively support each other in their efforts to improve quality of life in a community. Recognised 'leaders' actively seek to nurture 'emerging' leaders. Significant amounts of time are invested in planning and pursuing community health and action initiatives.

9.45am – 10.45 am: **Strengthening partnerships between TAFE, ACE, schools and community capacity building initiatives:**

- What are the current partnerships?
- How might partnerships be strengthened?

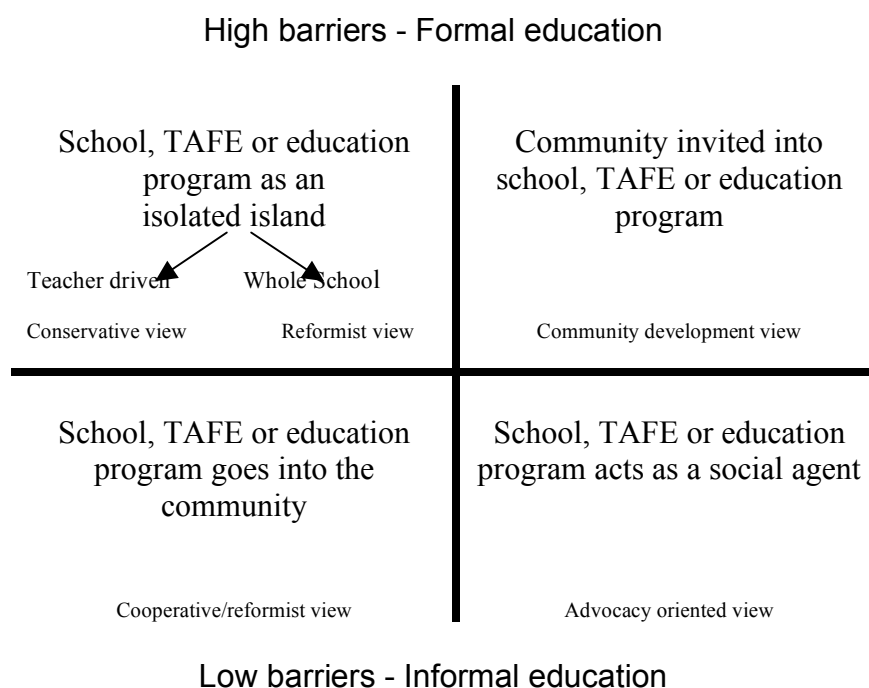
Distribute handout below and ask them to do the exercise.

Name a partnership between an education provider – be it a school, library, TAFE program, ACE college, training agency or other – and a community capacity building initiative.

Locate the partnership on a continuum ...

In any community–education relationship there will be a continuum of pedagogic purposes. At one end there is more value placed on the personal and educational development of individual learners (*individualistic purpose*) and at the other end of the continuum value is placed on a holistic and inclusive approach to learning where it was important for both individuals and the community to develop and learn (*holistic purpose*).

The second continuum refers to *institutional boundaries* - whether the educators placed high or low boundaries between themselves and the community. At one end where a school, TAFE or education program was focussed internally, seeing learning as only taking place within the school, TAFE or education program and seeing only a minor role for parents and the community it had a *high boundary*. At the other end where a school, TAFE or education program sought to engage in learning and include both parents and community, both inside and outside the school, TAFE or education program, it had a *low boundary*.



Considering both these dimensions led to the development of a four part framework that combined these two key dimensions in four distinct quadrants, enabling partnerships to be analysed as focussing on either:

1. *pupil development* – individualistic purpose with high institutional boundaries;
2. *individual development* – individualistic purpose with low institutional boundaries;
3. *citizen development* - holistic purpose with high institutional boundaries; or
4. *whole community development* - holistic purpose with low institutional boundaries.

Community – education relationships will be stronger the closer they are to the end of one continuum with low institutional boundaries and the end of the other continuum with a holistic purpose; in other words when they are situated in the advocacy oriented quadrant.

- 11.15 – 12.30pm **Education for community and individual advancement**
- Are there untapped 'educational' resources in Macksville?
 - Paulo Friere in Macksville

Read the paper below.

Ask them to describe and discuss a particular education program against the dichotomies in the table... see handout.

Describe and discuss a particular educational program or provider in the light of the following table. Where does it sit?

POPULAR	DOMINANT/TRADITIONAL
Education for social change	Education for individual change
Learning in action	Learning through absorption
Problem solving and action	Pre-determined institutional and national goals
Education for social capital	Education for human capital
Learning to conspire	Learning to be inspired
Education to champion rights	Education to meet needs
Education for critical understanding	Education for skills development
Education for community leadership	Education for individual leadership
Education to support self-help initiatives	Education to help organizations manage employees
Education for community development and empowerment	Education for individual achievement and empowerment
Education for economic, social and political democracy	Education for social mobility, private life, consumerism, authority and order
Education for reflection	Education for diffusion of knowledge
Learner of education	Consumer of education
Concern for social context	Concern for technique

Critical and Individualist Pedagogies for Community Strengthening: A polemic against trickle-down theories

Rick Flowers

Centre for Popular Education
University of Technology, Sydney

Do we pay enough attention to defining community strengthening?

I often ask myself – is there a difference between strengthening individuals and strengthening communities? I hear accounts of how individuals have been changed because of education programs. The nature of the changes typically include:

- Gaining more confidence
- Forming more social networks
- Development of vocational skills
- Strengthened resolve for continual self-improvement.

In these accounts the assertion is made that a changed individual will have a 'ripple effect.' The impact of these changes will 'trickle down' to strengthen and change others... and that, so the logic goes, strengthens community.

I'd like to throw a seed of doubt into this 'trickle down' theory. Does education for more individuals in the community necessarily strengthen community?

Perhaps there is another dimension to community strengthening where there is more focus placed on collective rather than individual capacity to bring about change. Capacities that may contribute to collective effort might include:

- more capacity to speak out
- engage in debate
- foster debate
- plan new initiatives
- recruit others
- raise awareness
- organise groups
- pose questions about the quality of life and help people find answers to those questions
- facilitate collective decision making
- lobby
- protest
- recognise structural disadvantage.

To what extent is the learning of these capacities embedded in education, particularly access and equity programs? These are capacities that are at the heart of a vibrant, grassroots democracy.

Do we pay enough attention to asking ourselves what sort of pedagogy strengthens communities?

By pedagogy I mean our theories of learning, teaching and assessment. There are different views about what people should learn, how they should be taught and assessed. I think it'd be a good thing to encourage debate about what sort of learning, teaching and assessment practices are likely to not only strengthen the capacity of individuals but also of communities.

Think about a situation where a number of residents express interest in a writing course. There are some who are interested in creative writing. There are some who are also interested in using the writing to be more active in commenting on public issues. There are different pedagogical responses that are possible. One response would involve a creative writing course that would teach individuals how to write their own short pieces. Another response might be a community writing course where the students not only write individual pieces but also collectively researched, debated and wrote about issues. The nature of the learning in the creative writing course is quite different to the learning in the community writing project. In the former it is about empowering individuals not a group. It is about writing techniques for individuals to be more creative whereas the latter is about learning writing and research skills to enable residents to comment on public issues.

The pedagogy behind each response is different. One might label them as liberal adult education and individual empowerment programs versus collectivist community development and critical pedagogy strategies.

Think about a local government authority and various community development agencies responding to an interest of workers and residents to learn about transport planning issues. They approach a community education co-ordinator. There are many possible pedagogical responses.

Is it possible to respond to this sort of scenario if one is required to include vocational outcomes for individuals in all courses? Can one presume that course participants are undertaking the course to improve their individual capacity to find employment? Imagine if our intent is that this course focus on strengthening collective capacity to analyse and act on issues of transport disadvantage. We are responding to the interest of housebound women who want to exercise community leadership. But they may be all over 70 years old and their motivation is to encourage and mobilise other women to get more involved in community action initiatives for transport disadvantage. In this case, requiring them to do job seeking training would alter the pedagogy and focus on collective action.

This reflects a tension between individualist, instrumentalist pedagogies versus collectivist and critical pedagogy strategies.

Speculating about pedagogy that strengthens communities

So what is pedagogy that strengthens communities?

Think about libraries. In any Australian region there is a local, municipal library, a local TAFE campus library, school libraries, and various government and non-government agencies have resource collections. We know that libraries do more than lend books to individuals. But is that named and understood? What role do and can libraries play in community strengthening strategies? A challenge for libraries is to see how, where and when they can assist and actively enhance local community development. For example, local users could be involved in a range of activities - from getting ready for active citizenship through thinking about development of a community council to thinking about environmental issues by examining the local provision of public transport.

I use this example of libraries to illustrate the difference between education that happens *in* communities and education *for* communities. Arguably the more library facilities there are, the more people will read and learn, and that in turn is good for the community. I am suggesting that even with the most extensive library facilities that it does not necessarily translate into education that strengthens communities. It might mean more books are lent out. But it does not necessarily mean more people are active in groups that are investigating and developing strategies to improve the quality of life. If we are going to contribute to the latter we need education that overtly and explicitly addresses collective and not just individual capacity.

I think it is useful to imagine critical pedagogy in opposition to dominant and conservative pedagogy...

POPULAR	DOMINANT/TRADITIONAL
Education for social change	Education for individual change
Learning in action	Learning through absorption
Problem solving and action	Pre-determined institutional and national goals
Education for social capital	Education for human capital
Learning to conspire	Learning to be inspired
Education to champion rights	Education to meet needs
Education for critical understanding	Education for skills development
Education for community leadership	Education for individual leadership
Education to support self-help initiatives	Education to help organizations manage employees
Education for community development and empowerment	Education for individual achievement and empowerment
Education for economic, social and political democracy	Education for social mobility, private life, consumerism, authority and order
Education for reflection	Education for diffusion of knowledge
Learner of education	Consumer of education
Concern for social context	Concern for technique