



Talk: Policy in Action: A Story from Australia

Speaker:

Radhika Gorur, University of Melbourne

Date / Time:

January 24, 2012 - 2:00pm

Venue:

Room 307, Third Floor, Pixel B, APU

Abstract:

In contemporary education policy, sophisticated, technical accounts of policy problems and solutions are being produced with the use of numeric calculations and comparisons. These calculations are seen as clear and unbiased, capable of revealing “what works” and identifying “best practices” without passion or distraction. Using the case of “like-school comparisons” in Australia the speaker explores how accounts of schooling and policy are rendered technical, and how these technical accounts begin to come undone as their epistemic and moral authority is challenged by various groups. The data suggest that the establishment of ‘facts’ is not merely a technical matter of the application of sound methodologies and measurements, but rather of negotiations, contestations, and legislations. Although technical accounts are precarious and need constant maintenance to sustain, they are increasingly becoming routine. Despite ample evidence of their limitations, such accounts continue to be persuasive, with more and more countries signing up for international and national comparisons. These calculations have begun to serve as a kind of infrastructure underpinning the way we understand and organize our world, with far-reaching consequences. It is for this reason that sustained critique of such accounts is of pressing importance.

A Note on the Speaker:

Radhika Gorur is a Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne. Her research interests include evidence based policy; the sociology of measurement; equity in education; and material semiotics. She has recently been studying higher education policy in India, particularly the internationalization of Indian higher education and the role of collaborations in reforms. She has nearly three decades of experience as a teacher at the primary and secondary levels, and has taught in Nigeria, India, Oman and Australia.