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Lessons for Higher Education: The university as a site of activism

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Résumé

Len Barton is acutely aware of the power of the academy to either enhance critical thinking or to depress it. He is a true academic, never accepting the received wisdom or perspective of any given sociological standpoint, no matter how powerful or fashionable it was at the time. He has encouraged and promoted a unique blend of professional and public sociology of education that has left a profound legacy not only in the UK but beyond.

While the neo-liberal ideology had hegemonic status for most of his professional life, Len chose to engage in a counter ideological struggle; he created new intellectual spaces in the academy where people could safely dissent from the reigning intellectual orthodoxies. He operated according to the principles of Gramscian thinking by mounting a war of position, in journals, books, teaching, conferences and research, for critical intellectuals. And he encouraged other people to do likewise.

This article explores the ways in which Len's work inspired the establishment of the Equality Studies Centre and the School of Social Justice in UCD. It outlines the lessons learned from Len Barton about higher education and its potential as a site for critical analysis and action.

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key words

public sociology
higher education
academic capitalism
equality and social justice
Ireland
public interest

The Academic Legacy

Len played a major role in the promotion of sociology of education and disability studies at a time when critical thinking within all sociological frames

was under attack in Thatcher-led Britain. He did not take the easy route of scientific formalism that flourished in so many sociology fields from the 1970s onwards (Calhoun, 2005). He eschewed those branches of the discipline that guaranteed 'careers', where trivial findings were given status at the expense of innovative reframing of sociological questions. He was always critical, always asking new questions, and refusing to accept received wisdoms no matter how much they accorded with his own political and intellectual perspectives. His ability to keep on asking awkward questions, to remain forever sceptical of certainty in science, meant that he never rested intellectually. He had no clearly defined academic comfort-zone and it was this critical legacy that made Len such an important scholar within the social sciences of disability studies and sociology of education.

Len also epitomised the reflexive sociological voice. His ability to look beyond what was presented, to ask the missing question, to name the missing presence, to constantly query whatever orthodoxy was at hand, made him an invaluable academic colleague. He was not representative of sectional interests, even those within the disability movement. He retained a critical distance from all forms of institutional power, including those aligned with social movements with which he was intellectually associated (Barton, 1988). Through his work he created a space for all types of sociology to flourish, be it professional, critical, public or policy-oriented (Burowoy, 2005). He did this very effectively within the fields of education and disability studies.

A third way in which Len contributed significantly to academic life was through his work on research design and methodology. He did not simply do 'transformative or emancipatory research' as some type of add-on to academic analysis (Barton, 2005). He was intrinsically emancipatory and enabling in his approach to all forms of scholarship. He facilitated a dialogue between experiential knowledge and academic propositional knowledge, especially in the journal *Disability and Society* that has had a profound and lasting effect on the way research is undertaken with disabled people. Through this journal, and other publications, he helped bring an end to the colonisation of disability as a research issue by those who had no interest in challenging injustices of recognition, power and resources that have plagued disabled people as research 'subjects' (Barton, 1988, 1989a. 1989b, 2001). He has played a major role in democratising the relations of research production, distribution and exchange in the disability field.

No tribute to Len that focused solely on his scholarship would be complete without reference to the way ethics and integrity was integrated into his academic work. Len brought a level of honesty to research and theory in education that was thoroughly refreshing. He did not seek out the powerful scholars across different countries that would advance his own profile in the new academic capitalist order (Slaughter and Leslie, 2001). Rather, he sought to support those critical and engaged scholars who were struggling to survive, swimming against the tide of new right politics and policies in the post-1990s era across a range of countries. Through the conferences and journals he developed he created intellectual spaces for critical thinkers like Peter Mayo and Mary Darmanin in Malta, Helen Phtiaka in Cyprus and Xavier Rambla in

Catalonia. Len also created an important international network for critical sociologists of education in Ireland.

The Impact of Len's Work

I first met Len Barton in the mid-1980s when I attended the Sociology of Education Conference that he convened annually in Edgehill College in Birmingham. I had read Len's co-edited works *Schooling, Ideology and Curriculum* (with Walker and Meighan) (1980) and *Gender, Class and Education* (with Walker) (1983) and I was looking for a sociological pathway that would guide me along the road to praxis, integrating academic work with activism. Being an activist as well as an academic, I never felt quite at ease with the certainties of university theorising about inequality, especially where this theorising was far removed from the sources of injustices that generated it. I saw Len as a kindred spirit in this regard. He had a deep and profound understanding of Gouldner's (1970) thesis, namely that the domain assumptions arising from our own biography impact on our paradigmatic assumptions. He was sensitive to the positionality of the theorist, to the fact that there is no view from nowhere in sociological terms.

In the 1980s, my experience of sociological research was that of a discipline that was working increasingly at a comfortable distance from those who had experiential knowledge of injustice. When social scientists wrote about inequality, their upper middle class domain assumptions seemed to dictate their paradigmatic proclamations about injustice (Lynch and O'Neill, 1994). Their personal and professional positionality seemed to remove them from the urgency and injuries of the injustices they documented (Oliver, 1992, Reay, 2000, Adair, 2005). Academic sociologists were trained to write about 'the poor' 'the disabled', 'women' or other oppressed groups without recognising the colonising character of research relations. They wrote about the oppressed as if they knew them better than they knew themselves; they often stole their voice and spoke in their name without seeing or knowing how demeaning and oppressive this act could be.

The way sociologists were working as professional commentators on inequality was epitomised for me in the work undertaken by social stratification theorists who saw social mobility as the pinnacle of egalitarian advancement (Goldthorpe, 1980). The deep-seated inegalitarian premise underpinning this classical liberal view of 'equality-as-social mobility' was almost impossible to challenge; mobility was the liberal equality mantra and to question it was to challenge the hegemonic voices of the sociological elite. Len was instrumental in breaking up that hegemony, not only by challenging the simple equal opportunities model that was so dominant in all areas of education (Barton, Meighan and Walker, 1980, Walker and Barton, 1983) but by highlighting the multiple forms that inequality could take, not least by focusing on disability and related exclusions over time, (Barton and Moody, 1981, Barton and Oliver, 1992, Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton, 2000)

Len's work had that sense of urgency and outrage that asked you to do more than simply become intellectually engaged with the subject matter at hand. While he expected excellence in scholarship (before 'excellence' became simply a marketing strategy), he also expected engagement and equality of respect and recognition for those who were defined as the 'subjects' of research. He was interested in transforming research relations in the disability area and the relations between those professionals who offered educational services and those who were recipients (Barton, 1988).

The conferences organised annually by Len became almost a place of pilgrimage, a source of inspiration and hope. They were a life line for people like me who were relatively isolated intellectually and politically in our work. He gave us an academic community to call in on, to support us and to challenge us. No matter how much he respected what we did, he always asked us to move on intellectually, to address other questions, take on new perspectives, to know that there is no resting place for engaged academics.

Len's influence on my work was not confined to what I learned from the conferences he organised. I also learned greatly from his own writing challenging the ideological underpinnings of special needs education (Barton, 1986, 1988, 1989a and 1989b, 2001 and Barton and Oliver, 1992). While I had always had a deep suspicion of the ideological biases inherent in the concept of 'general intelligence', developed from the time I had worked in a Research Centre that worked on developing similar tests, it was Len's work that galvanised my critique (Lynch, 1999). And that had implications for how we developed our relationship in Equality Studies with disabled people in Ireland.

Impact on Ireland

At the time that Len was challenging disablism in education in his early work, Ireland was still firmly working within a medical model; there was almost no dissent. We invited Len to and he gave a lecture in April 1992 titled *'Disability: The Necessity of a Socio-Political Perspective'*. As this lecture was attended by key figures in the disability movement and funded by the National Rehabilitation Board (the State agency managing the disability sector at the time) it played an important role in opening up a new debate about disability. With Len's help and support we subsequently invited his academic collaborators, including Mike Oliver, Sally French and Colin Barnes, to give lectures over a five year period from 1993 to 1997 inclusive. As this was a time of transition in Irish politics, when the equality legislation was being planned, the lectures were of considerable importance in policy terms. They helped introduce a new language to the disability movement in Ireland, fore-fronting equal rights and respect for disabled people, making a space for them to name their own injustices. They played an important role in moving the policy framework from one based on charity to one based on principles of equality for disabled people. The dividend from Len's work is found in the acceptance, at government level, of an equality-based discourse epitomised in the *Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities* (1996). While the gains from that time have been rolled back in new

legislation in the mid-2000s that did not endorse rights-based claims to services (de Wispelaere and Walsh, 2007), nonetheless the rights of disabled people not to experience discrimination in employment and in accessing services have been enshrined in a formal way in the Employment Equality Act (1998) and in the Equal Status Act (2000).

The Public Interest Role of the University

From an academic perspective, one of Len's greatest achievements, in my view, has been the way he envisioned the role of the researcher and the academy in social life. His profound understanding of how the academy should and could work in the public interest is one of his greatest legacies.

Len had a deep sociological understanding of the politics of higher education. He saw how universities were being transformed increasingly into powerful consumer-oriented corporate networks, whose public interest values were seriously challenged (Davies et al., 2006; Rutherford, 2005). Although higher education *per se* was not his primary research subject, he recognised that commercialisation had been normalised and granted moral legitimacy (Giroux, 2002), and that its operational values and purposes have been encoded in the systems of all types of universities (Dill et al., 2005, Steier, 2003). Moreover, his move to create new safe intellectual spaces for critical thought showed that he recognised that both the pace and intensity of commercialisation had been exacerbated (Bok, 2003, Henkel, 1997). Yet, Len was committed to the vision of universities as public interest institutions. Like Harkavy (2006) he did not believe that one could pretend that there was no difference between the commercial and public interests. And he also realised that to serve public interest values in higher education would be a struggle. In this context he became a great supporter of our work in UCD, helping us to maintain Equality Studies and develop the School of Social Justice as intellectual spaces built on the Freirean notion of critically engaged scholarship and praxis (Lynch, Crean and Moran, 2009).

Academics are granted the freedom from necessity to write and to teach in the public interest; however, there is a choice whether or not to use that freedom to act. While Len did the expected work of teaching, researching and publishing to promote critical thinking, he used his academic freedom in a way that most do not, by institutionalising journals and ways of doing research and teaching that will last over time. In particular he gave voice to people and issues that had been ignored in academia, most memorably the voice of disabled people in *Disability and Society.* But he also made space for those who believed that the quality of education mattered at all levels, including higher education by establishing *Teaching in Higher Education.* He created a forum for debate for those committed to critical excellence in sociology of education by founding *the British Journal of Sociology of Education* and *International Studies in Sociology of Education*.

What Len also did, and what many may not know, is that he created safe spaces for many new and lesser known academics from small places and countries by encouraging them to publish in the journals that he founded. For those who live in the academic metropole the intellectual perspective of those on the periphery is not generally of much interest (Alatas, 2006, Connell, 2007). Although Len was at the centre of the metropole, in the sense that he was situated in powerful universities in a major power stronghold of English-speaking academic publishing in the UK, he was reflexive and conscious of his own power and the potential it had to exclude or include those on the margins. While he did not write about this, his actions spoke to his principles. He made a deliberate attempt to include those who were on the margins of the metropole, particularly welcoming scholars who were marginalised in their own countries and communities due to their critical academic standpoint. I felt I belonged in both categories, as indeed did other Irish scholars that Len supported including Patrick McDonnell, who has played a pioneering role in challenging the medical model of disability and in recognising the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of the Deaf community (McDonnell, 2007). Len was also supportive of new scholars like Dympna Devine who promoted an innovative children's rights perspective in education and public life in Ireland (Devine, 2003). When one examined the list of invitees to the sociology of education conferences organised by Len each year, not only did the list include 'big names' in sociology of education, it also included academics from a wide range of smaller EU states. The wide range of people involved in contributing chapters to the many books that he edited also reflected his breadth of understanding of how the politics of knowledge worked and how to set agendas by recognising dissident voices (Barton and Tomlinson, 1981, Arnot and Barton, 1992, Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton, 2000)

Len played a quiet but important role in both encouraging and supporting us to set up and maintain the UCD Equality Studies Centre in 1990, and to establish the UCD School of Social Justice in 2005. While he was not our sole supporter[i], his belief in the mission we had set ourselves, to educate social justice and egalitarian-led activists from all walks of life, was profoundly reassuring over years of struggle for survival (Lynch, 1995; Lynch, et al., 2009).

With the postmodernist turn and the rise of neo-liberal politics, it seemed intellectually vagrant and academically suicidal to establish a Centre for Equality Studies in University College Dublin in the late 1980s. Yet it was precisely these challenges that inspired us to act. And it was my visits to the conferences that Len organised every New Year (I never liked the timing, in early January, but I knew I would be reinvigorated when I returned!) that reassured us that the educational work we were doing was worthwhile. In particular it reassured me that the approach which we took to our work was appropriate in our context. We learned from Len that while the scientific, including the sociological, must be distinguished from the political (Martinelli, 2008), there is a need to allow spaces for more than professional sociology or policy sociology (or the professional and policy-led dimensions of any disciplines) to thrive (Burawoy, 2005). Arising from his own work with disabled activists and academics, he encouraged us to protect the spaces for the sub-

altern within disciplines (Barton and Oliver, 1992). He recognised that there must be a space for academic knowledge to learn from experiential knowledge, with its complex positive and normative dimensions, especially in the study of injustices.

Questioning the binary between positive/normative has long been a key issue for us in Equality Studies (Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh, 2004). Len respected this position. Like Andrew Sayer (2006) he recognised that much research in the social sciences is profoundly unitary in terms of the normative and the positive. Even for those who do not subscribe to critical perspectives, and lay claim to independence, the normative is encoded in every publication and every lecture. When scholars write of 'discrimination' in law, 'exploitation' in sociology or 'marginalization' in education, they are not just describing a phenomenon, they are also naming it as undesirable because it undermines the well being of particular groups of people. They are making a normative judgment as well as an empirical statement, even if they do not explicitly name their normative position.

Len recognised that taking a 'critical' approach to scholarship promotes a particular normative position and set of values that makes the very critique of oppression, and indeed, the enterprise of much academic work, meaningful. While objectivity is vital for scientific analysis and for choosing the appropriate instruments for research investigation, there is an implicit normative dimension to the knowledge act.

Equality Studies and Social Justice – Keeping a place in the university

*'If you want to interrupt the right, study what they themselves did' (*Apple, 2007: 168). While the setting up of Equality Studies, and of the School of Social Justice, was inspired by a Gramscian-informed understanding of the role of culture and ideology in the realisation of change, and by the Freirean recognition of education's lack of neutrality, it was also inspired by lessons learned from the success of Thatcherism in the UK, and by the response to Thatcher's attacks on sociology by people like Len. One of the major achievements of the Thatcher era was that not only did it change the terms of political discourse in the UK, it successfully institutionalised neo-liberal beliefs and values in law and public policy. Len chose to engage in a counter ideological struggle; he was directly involved in challenging the academic ideologues of the conservatives and neo-liberals by providing spaces in the academy. He operated according to the principles of Gramscian thinking in terms of challenging hegemonic ideologies, mounting a war of position in journals, teaching, conferences and research for critical intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971).

While writing and teaching is the tool of the academic who wants to act for global justice, there is a need as Harkavy (2006: 7) has observed for '*strategic organisational innovation'*. There is a need to institutionalise ideals in the structures of organisations not just in their language or written policies, no matter how essential the latter may be. One of the reasons inequalities are

often difficult to challenge is because they are institutionalised in the categories of every day life (Tilly, 1998). By the same logic, if egalitarian changes are to be instituted, they need to be institutionalised in categories, positions, processes and systems that are built on egalitarian and social justice principles. Len understood the primacy of building institutions that would outlive their incumbents and the importance of 'strategic organisational innovation'. Len encouraged us (as did many other supporting academics in side and outside Ireland) in Equality Studies, and subsequently in the School of Social Justice, to institutionalise a physical and intellectual space to promote research and teaching on equality and social justice. We learned from what Len had done at his conferences, and through the journals he established and his publications, that while it was necessary to have programmes of education and research in the short term, in the medium to long term it was necessary to have an institutional base to help secure the future for critical thought and practice.

In realising change, there is a need to identify the interstices that Habermas noted, those places between spaces that allow for change and resistances to occur at different times. Times of transition within institutions are times that offer opportunities for resistance, for finding spaces to create new initiatives. While times of transition are also times of social closure, re-regulation and control, when those in power set out the terms of change and try to control its scope and impact, the transition itself creates instabilities. New orders are created and spaces are opened up to establish new programmes and initiatives if there are the resources to fight for these at the time. There is a very real sense in which these times of transition involve what Gramsci defined as 'wars of position'.

While Len used the cracks in Thatcher's academies to create new discourses of disability and inclusion, and new institutions to support these in the forms of books, journal and conferences, we used the uncertainty of transitions, in 1990 and 2004/5, to both initiate Equality Studies and to propose changes in courses, programmes and activities in the University[ii]. At each time, the proposals were met with oppositions, counter-resistances, not necessarily from central management, who were less concerned with their ideologies than with their likelihood of success, but by colleagues in other departments and schools, sometimes for ideological reasons (dislike of all things critical or socially engaged) and sometimes for fear that the programmes we offered might jeopardise their own subject or department. There is a lengthy correspondence in our files and emails on these challenges; having a team of colleagues who were committed to the project, and supporting academic colleagues, from inside and outside Ireland, who had a clear vision as to our role and purpose was crucial. It should also be noted, and Len appreciated and encouraged this, that our continuance was also greatly assisted by critically engaged civil society organisations that wanted us to promote the education of their own activists.

Institutional change offers threats as well as opportunities and these have also to be managed. In 2005, 'restructuring' was the euphemism for closing down unwanted departments in universities. It was the neo-liberal gospel for

higher education in Ireland, promulgated by the OECD (2004) under the guise of an 'independent review'. As with almost all Centres, Equality Studies was threatened with closure, or its surrogate, amalgamation into a larger 'established discipline'. We refused to accept this and demonstrated that the Equality Studies Centre was a 'brand name' (using the market rhetoric of the new regime) and necessary for the survival of our work. We also used data which we had accumulated (ironically, due to accountability demands over the years) to demonstrate our ability to set up a school. We knew that we had to get 'school' status if we were to survive, as schools were going to have legal status under the new statutes of the university. It would be more difficult to disestablish a School than a programme of studies or a Centre because of its institutionalised standing.[iii] In 2005 we established the School of Social Justice, where Women's Studies and Equality Studies are partners. Knowing that we had the support of people like Len at this time (and indeed in earlier times) was crucial, not because he was asked to act, but because we know he would if called upon.

Challenges – Disciplinary Issues

Our affinity with Len, and with the people in Disability Studies in the University of Leeds to whom we were introduced by Len, showed us that Equality Studies experienced the same difficulties that Disability Studies and all interdisciplinary fields including Women's Studies experience, it was and is not seen to be 'pure' scholarship; it is tainted by diversity[iv] and tolerated on the boundaries of the academy (O'Connor, 2006). Although there is recognition internationally of the central importance of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research (Nowotny et al, 2001), there is little status attached to such new areas of scholarship in most established universities[v]. Fields of study are indeed allowed to emerge but the core activities of the university centre around 'established disciplines'. The history of our experience in this respect is salutary.

The established faculties of UCD (which were assimilated into Colleges in 2005) did not regard interdisciplinary programmes as 'pure' enough in academic terms to house them when they were first established so Equality Studies (and other similar 'Studies' including Disability Studies and Women's Studies.) was faculty-homeless for several years until an Interdisciplinary Faculty was established in 2003. When, in the autumn of 2004, the new president and his 'team' began to 'rationalise' (a euphemism for close down) a number of faculties and departments, the Interdisciplinary Faculty to which we belonged was closed and Equality Studies was relocated to the College of Human Sciences. In all over 90 departments in the University were reduced to 35 departments and renamed as 'schools'[vi] There was considerable pressure on Equality Studies to join established single-discipline schools at this time. The likelihood that we would be minor players in large and otherwise monodisciplinary schools (and our knowledge of what had happened o Cultural Studies in Birmingham University when they had been amalgamated, Rutherford, 2005) motivated us to push for the establishment of a new interdisciplinary institutional space within the new university structures, in the

form of the School of Social Justice. This idea was accepted in principle after making a strong written case to the President as to the importance of social justice in the history and future of the University, and fighting for the school at numerous boards and Faculty meetings. In addition, we used the university's own ideology, which promotes the idea that UCD works for the entire community, to challenge our closure[vii]; it was an exercise in legitimation (Thompson, 1990). However, Women's Studies was the only Centre that agreed to join the new School f Social Justice. The Disability Studies Centre joined Psychology and The Development Studies Centre joined Politics although we had asked them to join Social Justice[viii]. In each case, the titles of the new schools did not reflect the merger, a further indication of the institutional hostility to interdisciplinarity. Politics was renamed as the School of Politics and International Relations and Psychology retained its name with no mention of Disability Studies.

In the neo-liberal age, fear plays a major role in controlling and regulating academic staff (Boden and Epstein, 2006). Moreover, because academics are taken over on a daily basis with anxieties about productivity within an intense system of surveillance, they disavow their own docility (Davies et al., 2006). And fear was a major reason why academic staff did not want to join Social Justice not just because it was seen to be a school without an 'established' disciplinary centre, but because colleagues believed that such a school would be closed down in time. However, fear was not the only motivation. Some of those we invited to join us made it clear that they did not wish to be part of a school based on the principle of social justice. The division between the normative and the positive was a priority value in the minds of many colleagues; Equality Studies and Social Justice had broken a taboo by aligning the normative and the positive and this continued to be unacceptable.[ix]

Challenges - Academic Capitalism

While academic life has always been highly individualised and driven by personal interests and ambitions, it was not always as driven by academic capitalism as it is currently (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). Len was a person who had lived through the changes and he saw how even not-for-profit higher education programmes had been forced to be a domain of market activity in recent years. He appreciated how under the globalised (and highly unscientific) league table regimes promoted by commercial interests, universities could not determine the conditions of their own appraisal (Marginson, 2006). Educational programmes that service low income communities, or research that is of value at national level, do not feature on university rankings. And as the experience of Cultural Studies in Birmingham (Rutherford, 2005) and multidisciplinary programmes and Women's Studies in many countries show, what is not counted can be closed. There is a serious threat to critical thought posed by marketized higher educational systems (Webster, 2004); it is a challenge Equality Studies has to confront. However, history is there to be made, it is not pre-given. Len has been one of the key people who reminded us of how being aware of the dangers and challenges facing the project is a key factor in survival and progression

Facing up to Regulation and Counting

Like Disability Studies and Women's Studies, by definition, the Equality Studies Centre and the School of Social Justice have to be socially engaged. Their work has a public dimension, in terms of researching with and educating those who work in social movements for social justice. Yet, if academic productivity is being measured by a narrowly construed bibliometric measure, public service engagement with vulnerable civil society groups is precluded. It simply does not count up as value in journal rankings. The devaluing of dialogue with persons and bodies other than academics effectively privatises learning among those who are paid-up members of the academic community be it as students or academics. The lack of dialogue with civil society in particular also forecloses the opportunity to have hypotheses tested or challenged from an experiential standpoint. It limits the opportunities for learning that occur when there is a dialogue between experiential and theoretical knowledge.

There is a strange irony in a narrowly framed peer review system, focused on bibliometric measurement that currently underpins the reward system of academic life. It encourages the 'good' academic to be detached, to become silent in the public sphere by dialoguing only with academic peers, ideally in international peer-reviewed journals rather than books. The disincentive to engage in public dialogue is also a product of the positive/normative binary, and the pressure on academics to eschew normative values if they are to demonstrate their credibility as legitimate scientists. Challenging the silencing is part of the struggle. And Len has shown us ways of doing this, particularly in the journal *Disability and Society*, where the voices of activists and academics are presented singly and/or together. It is a very practical example of institutionalised critically engaged scholarship in the making. It enables one to be both inside and outside the academy simultaneously.

Conclusion

Universities and higher education institutions are not neutral agents in the field of academic discourse. Like all educational institutions, they work either for 'domestication or for freedom' (Freire, 1972). Universities are projects in the making, places in which academics can either become agents of history or docile subjects (Davies et al., 2006).

What Len's academic life and work shows is that rather than being bewildered and overwhelmed by neo-capitalist academic rhetoric, we need to re-envisage and re-invent the university as a place of scholarly work grounded in the principles of democracy, equality and care that are at the heart of the public education tradition. And we need to re-emerge from the careerism and docility that is so much a feature of the neo-liberal university to do this (Davies et al., 2006). All of this means that we must reassess our position as critical intellectuals, and face-up to the limitations of the positive-normative divide (Sayer, 2006), especially in the analysis of injustices.

Just as Len has done, we must also allow space for the sub-altern to emerge both across and within disciplines so that the professional aspects of disciplines do not blind us to the need for engagement with the most significant issues of our time (Burowoy, 2005). Creating space in the university for scholarship on equality and social justice demands a dialogue with experiential knowledge holders. As Len's work in Disability Studies shows, those with experiential knowledge of injustice have much to teach us as theorists and researchers; and through education and research the university can in turn re-resource activists. Having a dialogue means democratising the social relations of teaching, learning, and exchange. Institutionalising ways of enabling the sub-altern to speak back has been one of Len's major contributions to sociology and to disability studies; there are few academics that have such credits to their name.

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[i] There are many, many academics from different countries who have supported us in developing and maintaining Equality Studies over the years; they could not all be listed here. However, we are especially grateful to Madelene Arnot, Michael Apple, Colin Barnes, Diane Reay, Andrew Sayer and Erik Olin Wright their sustained support over many years.

[ii] We proposed new courses and programmes (an M.Sc. and Graduate Diploma in Equality Studies, in the late 1980s and 1990 which naturally evolved to a PhD programme. We established a Certificate programme in 1994, and undergraduate optional courses in 2005,

that available to all university students. We also devised new structures as we worked (a Working Group in 1987, a Centre in1990 and a new research and teaching network in 2005, the Egalitarian World Initiative (EWI) 2005). www.ucd.ie/esc, www.ucd.ie/ewi

[iii] Equality Studies led the movement to create the School of Social Justice in 2005 with the support of Women's Studies. Although the School of Social Justice is one of the 35 statutorily recognised schools within new statutes of the University, this does not mean that Equality Studies and the School are institutionally unassailable. There will be new transitions to be managed in the future.

[iv] There are 4 full-time permanent academics and one permanent researcher in Equality Studies representing five different fields of study: economics, education, law, political philosophy, and sociology. There is also a part-time permanent post held by the Outreach Co-ordinator who runs the Certificate (non-graduate programme), and a range of researchers and post-doctoral fellows whose positions are funded by research grants.

[v] At a college meeting in Spring 2008 the vice-president for research at UCD (who had a medical background) referred to the non-traditional subjects in the university as those offering 'funny degrees'.

[vi] The change in nomenclature from Faculties to 'Colleges' and Departments to 'Schools' was not merely symbolic; it heralded a whole new set of power relations wherein responsibility was devolved to Schools and Colleges and power was centralised in the so-called Senior Management Team (SMT) of the Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Heads of the Five Colleges and other co-optees. The changes were institutionalised in new university statutes.

[vii] The UCD logo is 'Ad Astra Cothromh Féinne' which means literally 'Reaching for excellence (the stars) and working for the entire community'.

[viii] While a few individual staff from former Centres and Departments did want to join Social Justice, they were strongly encouraged by the university to accept the majority decision.

[ix] The place where this was forcibly articulated was at a meeting two colleagues and I were called to attend on July 19th 2005. The meeting was called on the pretext that it was to help us work out a framework for developing the Egalitarian World Initiative (EWI) Network www.ucd.ie/ewi within the College of Human Sciences. It turned out to be an *ad hoc* meeting, attended by four senior professors and a few other College staff; it was made clear to us that they were opposed to the work we were doing in the EWI and the new School of Social Justice. We were told we were 'politicising the university' and 'bringing it into disrepute'.