in M. Connolly, D. Eddy Spicer, C. James and S. Kruse (eds.) (2019) *The Sage Handbook of School Organization* London: Sage

Pre-publication paper

Inequality in Education, What Educators Can and Cannot Change

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Abstract

This paper examines the anti-egalitarian forces that undermine the realisation of equality in education, from within and without, while exploring the possibilities that education itself offers for the realisation of equality from within.

The first section is devoted to the examination of how economic inequalities undermine egalitarian policies within schools and colleges. It analyses the ways the unequal distribution of income and wealth, legitimated through the ideologies of meritocracy, reproduce social class, racial and disability-related inequalities in education. While education cannot be held responsible for failing to eliminate injustices that are not generated within education in the first instance, educators are accountable for their collaboration with the unrealisable myth of meritocracy in increasingly economically unequal societies.

As education plays a key role in intellectual formation, it has great potential to challenge injustices from within. The second section of the paper highlights two ways in which it can do this, by developing emancipatory pedagogical practices and respecting the intelligences of all learners from all classes on the one hand, and through reframing what is defined as valuable knowledge in a way that is gender-respectful on the other.

Introduction: The Class Ceiling[i]

It was widely believed by liberal educators in the post-World War II period that educational expansion would enable socially disadvantaged groups to advance through education, thereby reducing social inequality. While opening up secondary and tertiary education to previously excluded groups, did improve levels of education and enhance participation rates for non-traditional entrants relative to their historical position, inequalities in educational opportunity among students from different social class backgrounds have remained remarkably stable (Blossfeld and Shavit, 1993). The socially inconvenient truth is that the changes that occurred in the educational opportunities for the socially disadvantaged in the late twentieth century have had more to do with the changes in the structures of the labour market (namely a rise in the absolute proportion of white collar or middle class jobs) than increased opportunities arising from their relative successes within education (Brown, 2013, p. 681). What remained largely unforeseen by liberal educators is that the expansion of education

could not have a significant impact on relative social class dis/advantages, for reasons arising from the dynamic relationship between the structures of a capitalist economy and formal education (Marsh, 2011). This is currently exemplified by what is happening in higher education, as this is where the competition for class privilege is played out most intensely given its proximity to the class stratified labour market in the twenty-first century (Reay, 2017).

In the United States, the National Education Longitudinal Study of almost 9,000 students (from 1988 to 2000) found that the odds of completing college for a student from a high socioeconomic background were more than six times greater than for a student from a working class background, even when controlling for test scores, grades, and college expectations (Rumberger, 2010). The situation in Australia is equally stark: a study of the relationship between socioeconomic background and participation in higher education in Australia, France, Finland, Ireland, Norway and the UK found that Australia was the only country in which there had *'been no reduction in social group inequalities – in this instance over a period of almost two decades* [1980-2000].*'* (Clancy and Goastellac, 2007, p.151). In Ireland; while there has been an increase in participation rates for lower-income groups in higher education from 1980 to 2000 (Clancy and Goastellac, 2007), the rise in participation has been predominantly in less prestigious colleges and degree programmes. The relative educational advantages of the professional elite remain firmly in place, confirming Raftery and Hout's (1993) MMI (maximally maintained inequality) thesis that the relative advantage of the educational elite only declines when their participation rates reach saturation point (McCoy and Smyth, 2011). In Greece, social inequalities in both access to and participation within in higher education persist, despite the substantial increase in participation in higher education (Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2010). Even in strong welfare States, such as France and Germany, there is no indication of substantial changes in the pattern of inequality in access to tertiary education over the 20 year period from 1980 to 2000. There is also a clear social differentiation in the types of tertiary education accessed, with those from more privileged backgrounds accessing more elite institutions and courses (Duru-Bellat, Kieffer and Reimer, 2008). In a mass higher education market, it is the type of university/college attended and the status of the degree undertaken that increasingly determines labour market positioning rather than having a degree *per se*.

To highlight the ways in which class inequalities impact directly and indirectly on educational outcomes is not to underestimate the strong racialised dimensions to inequality in education (Brown and Lissovoy, 2011; Gillborn, 2008). Race exacerbates inequalities arising within the educational system and is deeply imbricated with social class (Condron, 2009; Gillborn, 2015). The work of Lipman (2004) shows how the logic of race and capital have worked together to privatize public schools in the US in a way that allows the State to cast off responsibility for educating 'people of colour'[ii] while

allowing educational investors to profit from privatizing schools. Moreover racial inequalities outside of education impact on students' experiences within it, most especially through racialised housing and segregation (Condron *et al.,* 2014).

Inequality also operates through disability labelling and classifications, labels that are frequently strongly classed (Riddell and Weedon, 2016), but do not necessarily result in better resourcing within schools and colleges for the educationally disadvantaged (Riddell, 2009). More generally, a deep-rooted ableism underpins formal education (Hehir, 2002): which intelligences and abilities are classified as eligible for education plays a major role in defining who is excluded or included in different types and levels of education. It predetermines the parameters of educational success for so-called 'disabled'[iii] students in particular. Given what we now know about the many faceted intelligences of human beings (Gardner, 1983, Sternberg, 1985), it is extraordinary that most standard educational assessments remain pen and paper tests measuring learning through the medium of linguistic and mathematical capabilities. While IQ tests that purport to measure the *g* factor (general intelligence) have been scientifically discredited, they have been replaced by close correlates, so-called academic aptitude tests, such as the SAT. The latter has many of the features of IQ tests including relying heavily on 'reading comprehension and vocabulary items like analogies and antonyms' in the verbal sections of the test (Lemann, 1995: 86)[iv]. Although it is known that aptitude and IQ-type tests are both social class and racially biased, and inherently disablist, given their substance and method of testing, they remain in widespread use across the world[v].

The pre-eminent role that social class and racial inequality outside of school exercises over educational outcomes and opportunities is not to underestimate the significant role that schools and educators play in determining educational outcomes. Whether educationalists (and governments) adhere to beliefs in essentialist or developmental presumptions about students' intelligences impacts on how students are classified and selected for schools and tracks. Teacher biases and stereotypes also play a role in exacerbating inequality (Steele, 2011) as do the designs of examinations and selection systems (Fischer *et al.,* 1996). Tracking and/or streaming within and between schools, in turn, impinges on the quality of education students receive, and on levels of social class and racial inequalities in educational outcomes (Le Tendre *et al*., 2003; Oakes, 2005; Van de Werfhorst and Mijs, 2010). While schools can and do adopt educational policies to address such biased practices, there are subtle and complex ways in which classed and raced cultural processes impede the promotion of equality through education (Lamont, Beljean and Clair, 2014; Stephens, Markus and Phillips, 2014). And egalitarian policies are frequently undone in an unequal society by the actions of privileged parents protecting the interests of their own children (Ball, 2004, Crozier, Reay and James, 2011; Lareau, 1989).

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What Schools Cannot Change

Although the quality of teaching and the nature of curriculum and assessment procedures can significantly enhance individual's capabilities and life chances relative to others, especially in a labour-migratory globalised economy, it cannot overcome economic injustices directly when the generative site of those injustices is not located within the education system in the first instance.

It was the political shocks arising from wide-scale war that contributed significantly to the reduction of inequality in most developed countries between 1910 and 1950 (Piketty, 2014, p. 20). And it was the restructuring of the economies and occupational structures in Western capitalist states in the post WWII period that enabled absolute rates of social mobility to rise not changes in education *per se* (Goldthorpe, 2007). In the post-1980 period, it was the deregulation and geopolitics of taxation and finance that contributed significantly to the rise of economic inequality (Piketty, 2014, p. 20). The rise of precarious work, zero hours contracts and the proliferation of low waged-economies in the services sector, in Western capitalist states (Standing, 2011[vi]) is not the direct outcomes of actions in the education sector; education cannot prevent powerful employers creating low-paid jobs, or failing to provide pensions for their workers; it cannot alter the structure of the capitalist economy that creates the inequality that contributes to unequal access to and participation in education (Marsh, 2011). The new oligarchic rich are global citizens and increasingly detached from nation states and their policies (Streeck, 2016, p. 28); *noblesse oblige* does not apply. It is not the educational institutions that enable them to maintain their class advantage through inheritance, low taxes on wealth, deregulated financial markets and the free movement of capital across borders. The latter is a function of mobilized class power, be it in international law, military spending, fiscal policy and/or the legislative and political infrastructures of global capitalist economies The super-rich can block wealth taxes and buy political majorities through campaign contributions, while maintaining social legitimacy through philanthropy (Streeck, 2016,pp. 28-30). In determining levels of inequality, 'inherited wealth comes close to being as decisive at the beginning of the twenty-first century as it was in the age of Balzac's *Père Goriot'*. Major class inequalities are not a product of educational policy *per se*. To the contrary, 'the main force in favour of equality has been the diffusion of knowledge and skills' (Piketty, 2014, p. 22).

Growing Economic Inequality: implications for education

The rise of neoliberal capitalism and the related growth in wealth and income inequalities, since the 1970s, has, however, presented new challenges for education,

challenges that were exacerbated by the financial crisis in 2007/2008 (OECD, 2015; Streeck, 2016; TASC, 2016).

Reardon's (2011) meta-analysis of 19 national studies over a 50 year period found that inequality in education increases as society becomes more unequal. What happens is that rising economic inequality leads to a rise in relative poverty, poorer housing, and lower standards of health care, all of which impact directly and indirectly on educational participation; it also reduces the scope for parity of participation as it seriously limits the ability of the relatively poor to access educationally-relevant cultural activities out of school. Moreover, a rise in wealth and income inequality is generally aligned ideologically and practically with policies of disinvestment in public services that disempowers those who are poorest: as poorer families cannot afford to access private education, they have to rely on a depleted public service where quality is comprised due to declining investment. The impact of disinvestment is felt at all levels of education but is highly visible in the non-compulsory sectors as the move to privatize and commercialise accelerates in further education (Grummell, 2014) and in higher education: a minority of EU countries have increased investment in higher education in real terms since 2008, while investment declined by up to 10% or more in several EU countries during the financial crisis, especially in Southern and Eastern European states (European Parliament, 2015), and in Ireland (Department of Education and Science, DES, 2016). In most Anglophone countries, loans have replaced higher education grants for students with the attendance consequences of impoverishment through rising debt, and, in the case of England, a dramatic reduction in the intake of mature students (Sutton Trust, 2016).

While access to economic capital impacts on educational attainment, so, increasingly does access to cultural and social capital in tight labour market situations (Putnam, 2015). Employers look for 'social skills, cognitive abilities and other personal characteristics in addition to, or even instead of, formal qualifications' many of which are social class-related (Richards, Garratt, Heath, Anderson and Altintas, 2016). Employment opportunities and rates of pay for graduates with identical degrees are strongly stratified by social class in a number of European countries (Franzini and Raitano, 2013). Not only are parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds far better placed to provide their children with the extra forms of social and cultural capital required in highly competitive labour markets (Brown and Hesketh, 2004), they are also the people who define what is socially and culturally valuable in the first instance (Bourdieu and Passerson, 1977).Through their social networks, the elite can position their children to enter the more lucrative and prestigious fields of employment.

Private Family Investment

In a global order where most households own no productive wealth, education has become the primary route to economic security and a major determinant of class positioning. While those with most resources cannot 'buy' superior educational credentials directly, they can protect their likelihood of acquiring these through investment in private (socially exclusive) schooling and tuition (Smyth, 2009): and private financial investment is advantaging children in high-income households in terms of educational attainment (Duncan and Murnane, 2011). Moreover, research in the US shows that families in the top income quintile (richest 20%) are spending almost seven times as much per child per annum in out-of-school enrichment activities compared with the poorest 20% ($9,000 per child compared with $1,300) (Kaushal, Magnusson Waldfogel, 2011). The growing achievement gap by social class is being matched by the persistent achievement gap by race, and all are related to income differentials and economic inequality (Reardon, 2011; Magnuson and Waldfogel, 2008).

Rising economic inequality also promotes a climate of fear and distrust that propels anxiety and fear about the future (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). The fear of being consigned to a life of low-paid insecure work drives the intense competition for more and more credentials in education. In particular, it drives the wealth-poor middle classes to use education, as they have always done, to maintain or advance their class position in ways that are also strong racialized (Ball, 2003; Crozier, Reay and James, 2011). It also keeps the poor in their place as the middle and upper class fight to protect their advantages in education by maintaining the educational status quo.

Even though most welfare capitalist states have invested in making education internally more egalitarian in terms of its quality and procedures, this work is increasingly undermined by other fiscal and public policies that allow the rich to get richer and thereby advantage their children increasingly outside of school.

Ideologies of Equality of Opportunity and Meritocracy: Justifications for Inequality

It would be very difficult for educational (and economic) inequality to be sustained over time in democratic societies unless it was deemed morally justifiable and socially acceptable. The moral justification for unequal outcomes is provided through widespread allegiance to a liberal code of equality of opportunity (EO)[vii]. There is a belief that the EO principle is an acceptable guide to policy in the distribution of social goods: it is encoded in EU Treaties, and advanced within member states by a variety of legally binding directives. Its legal status adds to its legitimacy as a mechanism for distributing social goods, including education.

The principle of equality of opportunity is formally operationalised in education through the practice of meritocratic selection; competition for advantage is regulated by

rewarding those who achieve highly. The most 'meritorious' (where IQ+Effort=Merit[viii] Young, 1958) are given high grades and the least 'meritorious' are awarded lower grades; on the basis of these grades, education and social selection for each stage of education and, ultimately, for the labour market, is determined.

Given the relationship between educational success, income, wealth and other forms of social and cultural capital outlined above, meritocratic selection is simply unattainable in an economically unequal society (Brown, Lauder and Ashton, 2011, Brown, 2013; Mijs, 2016). What is largely ignored is the false promise of methodological individualism underpinning equal opportunities thinking: the logic of social hierarchy, which is endemic to liberalism, does not permit the election of the few to become the pattern for the many. Because credentialised education is a positional good, its value is always relative; to succeed one must have more of the valued credentials that one's competitors. In an unequal society however, those who hold privileged positions protect them, through a variety of means, including altering the rule of entry to professions, lengthening the time it takes to qualify for particular positions, introducing soft (social) skills and as well as hard skills (academic grades and credentials) for selection. All of these increase the cost, time and distance (social, cultural and even geographical) between those who are well resourced and those who are not within the educational competition.

Meritocratic policies are also unrealisable for other reasons. The abilities and opportunities to be meritorious are based on non-meritocratic factors (including inheritance and the circumstances of birth); in addition, what is defined as worthy of merit recognition at a given time and culture is quite arbitrary and, by definition, excludes some groups (Mijs, 2016). The key question always remains, who has the power to define which abilities are of merit and how does a society know and measure abilities (intelligences) and/or effort. There is no clear formula for measuring these that is not deeply subjective and numerous studies show that meritocratic traits vary across societies and over time (Mijs, 2016).

Karabel's (2005) study of how the definitions of merit changed in Harvard, Yale and Princeton over the twentieth century in ways that enabled them to exclude unwanted outsiders, be these non-whites, Jews, Catholics or women, is proof of the arbitrariness of merit. The inclusion of large numbers of students within contemporary universities who have dyslexia or other disabilities is also proof of how arbitrary exclusions 'on merit' have been historically. The problem remains that those who have the power to define 'merit' will always do so in a way that will ensure their own children are meritorious (Mijs, 2016, p.21). The principle of meritocracy is an ideology that justifies inequality not a means of overcoming it.

A further problem with the principle of meritocracy is that it 'crowds out' debates about equality and need (Mijs, 2016, pp. 23-26). This is, as Mijs suggests, perhaps its most dangerous characteristic. The belief that one can select and find the meritorious creates a widespread political and educational culture focused on finding 'the talented few'. It fosters a belief in a neoliberal era that only a minority of talented (market valuable) people exist, propelling the so-called 'global war for talent' (Brown and Tannock, 2009).

Focusing on the development of the few at the expense of the many over-rides and weakens other values in education: nurturing, trust, integrity, care and solidarity are subordinated to regulation, control and competition. Investment in 'elite' scholars, athletes, leaders, musicians, actors (the so-called 'bright', 'gifted' 'smart' 'able' students) is prioritised over investment in those with greatest educational needs, who could be equally 'bright, smart, gifted and able' if given the opportunity.

As the amoral principle of competition become the necessitous in a meritocratic system, documenting scores, educational attainments and ranks becomes an industry in itself. Student and staff idealism to work in 'the public interest' is diminished as energy and time must be devoted to documenting institutional and/or personal achievements (Lynch, 2015). Moreover, educating those who are most disadvantaged ceases to be a priority as the vulnerable are a threat to a good performance appraisal.

What emerges is a twenty-first century manifestation of essentialist, eugenics-related logic, declaring that only a minority are worthy of investment. This translates into procedures whereby educational resources are redirected to policies and practices that will ensure there is selection of the meritorious few. Resources and research are redirected away rather than towards the socially disadvantaged (Brown and Tannock, 2009). The rise of elite academies, centres for so-called gifted children in schools and merit scholarships in universities, are all indicative of this trend.

Concluding Remarks

That education cannot undo economic inequalities, in and of themselves, is a reflection of the general inability of liberal equal opportunities policies to deliver social justice in an economically unjust society. This is something Tawney (1931) predicted almost 100 years ago. Speaking of promoting equality of opportunity in a capitalist society he stated: 'Equality meant not the absence of violent contrasts in income and condition, but equal opportunities to become unequal…equality … is encouraged to reign provided it does not attempt to rule' (Tawney, 1931, p. 103).

While this suggests that promoting equality as a principle in education is a hopeless exercise, such is not the case. The quality and organization of education matters as it

has the capacity to exacerbate or counter inequalities arising from social class, race, gender and disability. What is necessary however is to ensure that education is not required to do the socially impossible, namely to reduce economic inequalities directly (Apple, 2015). This is not within its scope (Marsh, 2011, 2015). Economic, social and educational policies need to be integrated in a way that economic inequalities are reduced to the level that they do not impinge on educational outcomes, a tall order, but it is only when there is equality of economic condition that there can be real and substantive equality in education (for a discussion on this see Baker and Lynch, 2005)

Because what happens in education does matter for the promotion of equality more generally, the following section will focus on two key ways in which education can promote equality in ways that would be truly emancipatory.

What Schools and Colleges Can Change

What is clear from the above is that the liberal view of equality in education, namely that education provides a safe route for *relative* social mobility for the socially disadvantaged, is actually unrealizable in increasingly economically unequal societies. While *absolute* social mobility is possible when there are plenty of new well-paying jobs to absorb the socially mobile within a given society, this is function of the way the economy and technology develops rather than education. This is not to deny the transnational value of educational credentials, something that is not sufficiently recognised in discussions that focus solely on nation states. If one is compelled or chooses to migrate for employment, it is better to carry a degree than a shovel or an apron. In a globalised economy, the highly educated can attain high status jobs in other countries (especially in less developed countries) where they can outcompete poorly educated others (Brown and Tannock, 2009).

Exploiting the possibilities of Education:

In this section, I will explore some of the possibilities education offers for promoting equality more generally in society. First it is important to recount and address the dystopian view of education as a site of simple class reproduction.

From the publication of *The Inheritors* (1979) through *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1977) Bourdieu and Passerson's work has been synonymous with the intellectual tradition that rejects the view that education can be an agent of egalitarian change. Rather than relying on claims of birth or titles of nobility, Bourdieu and Passeron hold that the school, an ostensibly class neutral and relatively autonomous space, grants legitimacy to the reproduction of class privilege, by conferring titles of academic nobility on the already socially elected (Bourdieu, 1996).

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Education conceals its true purpose of 'social selection under the guise of technical selection'. It legitimates inequality and 'the reproduction of the social hierarchies by transmuting them into academic hierarchies' (Bourdieu and Passerson, 1977, p. 153). They claim that those who fail come to believe that they are legitimately dispossessed:

> Thus, in a society in which the obtaining of social privileges depends more and more closely on possession of academic credentials, the School … manages the more easily to convince the disinherited that they owe their scholastic and social destiny to their lack of gifts or merits, because in matters of culture absolute dispossession excludes awareness of being dispossessed. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, p. 210)

Bourdieu and Passeron dismiss the idea that education can be reformed from within to become emancipatory. They regard attempts at transforming education as a naïve exercise, a utopianism that would not be permitted given the power of those who exercise pedagogic authority (PA), because '…quite apart from the built-in inertia of every educational institution, the structure of power relations prohibits a dominant PA from resorting to a type of PW [pedagogic work] contrary to the interests of the dominant classes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, pp. 53-4).

Education's Emancipatory Potential

The claim that education is doomed to failure in addressing class inequality directly is a compelling argument given the empirical evidence available. However, education is not a black box governed only by powerful class interests. Those who work and learn within it have educational and political agency. The work of Ranciere (1991) and Paulo Freire (1970 [2000]), and those who have followed in Freire's educational and policy footsteps in particular, (Apple, 2013; Aronowitz, 2008; Borg and Mayo, 2007; Giroux, 1997; Shor 1992) show that education need not simply be a site of class reproduction.

Education has liberatory potential if one believes and trusts in the 'equality of intelligences' between students and teachers (Ranciere, 1991). Replacing 'stultifying' education with emancipatory education, where the educator recognises the abilities of all people to come to know and learn has powerful transformative potential. Contra Bourdieu, Ranciere argues that liberation is possible if education takes place among a 'community of equals' and educators recognise the intellectual capacities of all people (Ranciere, 1991, pp. 45-73). For this to happen, there needs to be radical educational change, a change that focuses more on the form of pedagogy deployed, moving it from

'stultifying' 'understanding' to self-directed emancipation. 'Only a man can emancipate a man[ix] . …And no party or government, no army, school or institution, will ever emancipate a single person' (Ranciere, 1991, p. 102).

Liberatory education is about the educational relationship itself (hooks 1984, 2010). Working through dialogue and humility, it can be liberatory when it enables people to trust in their own abilities to come to know the world and to frame it in their own terms. It is possible to abandon 'banking education', where education has become 'an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor …[where] the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat' (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Liberatory education begins with the resolution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students (ibid). Schools and places of education are not without class contradictions but they can exploit those contradictions to resist injustices when the opportunity arises (Borg and Mayo, 2007; Crean and Lynch, 2011)

The power of education to frame social consciousness is proven by the intensity of the political battles that have taken place historically over education. It was evident in colonial times where education was regarded as an effective means of domesticating local populations[x], and in the early twenty first century where it is regarded as a means to realising the political goals of powerful multilateral institutions such as the European Commission (which has actively promoted employment-focused competencies among EU citizens through the Lisbon Agreement), and in the move by conservative governments to close a university (in Hungary) and remove politically dissenting academics from their posts (in Turkey) in 2016-7.

Schools and colleges are also places where people work; they are sites of economic activity and as such they are a potential site for cultural organisation and enabling and protecting political dissent. The mobilisation of the American civil rights movement, and, most recently, of communities in the US against television advertising to children is schools is proof of how schools operate as cultural sites of organisation and resistance. Schools and Colleges have been at the centre of political movements for egalitarian change through enabling and facilitating social movements (Apple, 2015; Ivancheva, 2017).

Althusser (2014 [1995]) identified three major ideological apparatuses within the machinery of the state (education, the media and religion). In most countries, both the media and religious organisations are controlled by powerful commercial and/or religious interests that can and do direct ideological formation without democratic regulation. Education remains the principal site of ideological formation that is largely democratically controlled. While the level of democratic control in education varies by

country and type and level of education, nevertheless, education, especially higher education and community education, offer many opportunities for the cultural production of ideas and practices to promote social justice. Whether educators avail of this opportunity or not is an open question, but it is not predetermined. If student teachers (as noted by Macedo (2000) in his introduction to the 30th anniversary edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) are never exposed to the ideals of emancipatory education then it is very difficult to see how they can develop an emancipatory view of schooling and education: 'the Harvard Graduate School of Education sanctions a graduate course called "Literacy Politics and Policies" without requiring students to read, critique, and analyse the work of Freire. In fact, one can get a doctoral degree from this school, or from others, without ever learning about, much less reading, Paulo Freire. This is tantamount to getting a doctoral degree in Linguistics without ever reading Noam Chomsky' (Macedo, 2000, p. 16).

Whether the revolutionary potential of education can be realised by the common schooling proposed by Gramsci (2007 [1971]) and endorsed by (Burawoy, 2012), or the emancipatory dialogical methods outlined by Freire, is an open question. What is clear is that education is not neutral or mechanical; teachers have the capacity to be dialogical liberating educators in both how they teach and in the curricula they design. To operate in this way they need to be given the opportunity to study the theory and practice of emancipatory practice in their teacher education programmes in the first instance. What is at issue now is that much teacher education has become mechanical, driven indirectly if not directly to 'train' teachers to meet targets. The surveillance and market-led orientation of education is not confined to any one level of education (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012) and this feeds back into teacher education which is becoming more rather than less conservative (Simmie and Edling, 2016). For teachers to be liberated, their own education needs to be liberatory rather than mechanistic (Macedo, 2000).

The Gendering of Emancipatory Education: Education for Love, Care and Solidarity

There is much truth in Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) claim that educational institutions are designed to impose the 'cultural arbitraries'[xi] of more powerful groups on those that are subordinate. This has happened in social class terms (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), in colonial terms (Alatas, 2003; Connell, 2007; Said, 1991), and in gender terms (Harding 1991; Smith 1987). The work of Mignolo (1999, 2009) shows how European universities have played a key role in cultural and intellectual colonisation across a range of continents that is deeply racialized. The 'Geo-politics of knowledge goes hand in hand with geo-politics of knowing…. it is a racially marked body in a geo-historical marked space that feels the urge or get the call to speak,….'

(Mignolo 2009, p. 2). A similar issue arises for deaf people, whose differences from hearing people as primarily cultural and linguistic; they are defined by dominant groups as 'dis'abled (Ladd, 2003). As with others classified as 'dis'abled, the negative prefix of 'dis' frames the perception of the learner in a negative lights, focusing on the perceived impairment rather than abilities.

The failure to problematize the power of the narrator in science, history, geopolitics, philosophy, literature, art, music or culture more generally, means that the cultural contributions of the subordinated are identified as 'other' and are treated as irrelevant and/or inferior, not worthy of incorporation. They are subjected to a kind of cultural imperialism that renders them either invisible or, if visible, subject to negative stereotyping or misrecognition (Alatas, 2003; Spivak, 2008). When educational and cultural institutions portray subordinate groups as 'native', innocent, inferior, irrelevant, deviant, ugly or threatening, they legitimate acts of disrespect, disdain and violence (Harding, 1991; Said, 1979; Young, 1990). In this scenario, members of oppressed groups have their lives interpreted through the lens of the dominant. Misrepresentations and omissions become 'common sense'.

The principal inequalities that many groups experience in education therefore do not arise from the unequal distribution of wealth *per se* but from a lack of respect and recognition (although lack of resources and wealth impacts on lack of respect) (See Lynch and Baker, 2005 for a detailed discussion). Status-related inequalities, relating to age, sexuality, disability, language, gender, race or ethnicity, and/or religious/other beliefs, are rooted in the symbolic realm, in patterns of interpretation, definition and communication. Institutionally, they involve practices of denial and misrecognition (Young, 1990).

Because it is not possible to examine the status-based injustices that underpin inequalities in education for all groups, this paper will focus on one major injustice, the neglect of education for relational life, especially education regarding love care and solidarity.

Women are the primary carers in the world: they do most of the paid and unpaid love and care work for humanity (Lynch, Baker and Lyons, 2009). The neglect of education about care as a concept and a field of human practice (in Bourdieu's terms, a 'social field') is one of the major ways in which gender disrespect and non-recognition find educational expression (Lynch, Cantillon and Lyons, 2007).

There is a need to rethink the epistemological basis of what we value in education, because knowing is not confined to reason only, even if Western thinking assumes it to be (Nussbaum, 2001). What we know about the world is learned emotionally, positively and negatively, in many important ways: 'Emotions are not irrational pushes and pulls,

they are ways of viewing the world. They reside in the core of one's being, the part of it with which one makes sense of the world.' (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 374). Because of this, the deep indifference to education about the place of emotions, vulnerability, and the dependency and interdependency that underpins the human condition, is a major omission.

At the root of the problem lies the concept of the ideal citizen informing education and emanating from classical liberal education: the focus is on the development of the autonomous rational actor encapsulated in the Cartesian dictum *Cogito ergo sum*. The student is educated (and is understood socio-educationally) for living in the public sphere as an economic, political and cultural actor. She or he is not educated for a relational life as an interdependent, caring and solidaristic human being (Noddings 1984, 2001). To the contrary, contemporary education draws heavily on Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of cognitive objectives, emphasizing the development of logical mathematical intelligence and abstract reasoning (Gardner, 1983) in measuring educational capacity and success (merit). It has inherited from classical liberalism an indifference to the affective domain and an allegiance to the education of the rational autonomous subject (Noddings, 2003).[xii]

A further problem arises from the separatist view of personhood that informs so much of academic and educational thinking; this generally ignores the reality of human dependency and interdependency across the life course (Kittay, 1999). The idealization of autonomy, choice and self-interest as the over-riding orientations of social relations has led to an analysis and development of a human condition that is sociologically naïve (Archer, 2000; England, 2005). The problem is exacerbated by the fact that contractual models of social relations tend to inform dominant moral theories, including those operating within education. As these 'are built on liberal models of social relations between strangers' (Held, 2006, p.80), the care life of people is often ignored. Education for doing love, care and solidarity work[xiii] is generally not part of the formal educational curriculum (Lynch *et al.,* 2007). Moreover, the very institutions that legitimate what is valid knowledge, institutions of higher education, are deeply disrespectful of care in ways that are highly gendered (Lynch, 2010).

Even the growing recognition of emotional and personal intelligence within developmental psychology (see Gardner, 1983; Goleman, 1995; Sternberg, 1985, 2002) has not unsettled the focus of education on development the market citizen. Within research on emotional intelligence (EI) there is a strong focus on the relevance of EI for measurable achievement; it is generally defined as a capability that enhances and supplements other marketable capabilities including academic attainment (Grewal and Salovey, 2005; Lopes *et al*., 2006; Vandervoort, 2006).

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While Cartesian rationalism lies at the heart of liberal education, the way in which contemporary education is now largely defined as a preparation for employment is a more recent phenomenon. It is reinforced by the scholarly equation of work with economic self-preservation and self-actualization through interaction with nature (Gúrtler, 2005). Non-market work, human service work, and especially care work, are peripheralised within this frame (Folbre, 2001). Employment-led education is strongly patriarchal as it peripheralises the care infrastructures of society where women are disproportionately working as paid and unpaid labourers.

The ways in which patriarchy was embedded in employment-led education was exacerbated in the post-1970s neoliberal era when the value of education became increasingly measured in terms of its market returns to employment. The focus of the EU's Lisbon agreement exemplifies this. It prioritises preparing citizens for the 'knowledge economy': knowledge is reduced to the status of an adjective in the service of the economy. At the individual level, the purpose of education is defined in terms of personalised human capital acquisition, making oneself skilled for the economy *'the individual is expected to develop a productive and entrepreneurial relationship towards oneself'* (Masschelein and Simons, 2002, p. 594). No serious account is taken of the reality of dependency for all human beings, both in childhood and at times of illness and infirmity. While the citizen carer and the care-recipient citizen are recognised in the educational arena, this generally only happens when professionals are being trained 'to manage' those in need of care. The inter/dependent citizen is left outside the educational frame.

What is surprising about this is that education largely ignores developments in social cognitive neuroscience showing that humans are not isolated rational actors but are strongly driven by the desire for social connection. Human brains are made for social connection not just for thinking (Lieberman, 2013). Studies of infants show that 'the desire for relationship, pleasure in connection and the ability to make and maintain relationship are present at the onset of development' (Gilligan, 1995, p.123), while a 'neurobiology of attachment' is emerging that is helping to illuminate the importance of love (Damasio, 1994). Nurturing is what produces human beings in their relational humanity as mentally healthy, warm and considerate human beings. It has liberatory potential because, as Hill Collins observes '…love is active, dynamic, determined and generates the motive and desire for justice' (1990, p.197).

While the neglect of the affective lives of people represents a very profound form of cultural imperialism in gender terms, it impoverishes education for all students: young people and men and women are deprived of the opportunity to develop an understanding of care, love and solidarity work, work that is central to the business of human well-being (Kittay, 1999).

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Conclusion

Educational institutions alone cannot eliminate social class (or racial) inequalities as the generative site of social class injustices rests on economic rather than educational relations. While the way schools and colleges operate can exacerbate or ameliorate inequality, education is not the sole arbiter of social class production or reproduction. Outside of the market economy, culture, politics, civil society, the family, housing, transport, the media, and the arts, are all sites that produce and reproduce class, racial, gender and other inequalities. What educators in a position to do however is to challenge the doxas[xiv] of their own educational trade. They can do this by calling out, through emancipatory pedagogical practices, the internal contradictions of the educational system, particularly its classed, raced, dis-ability and gendered contradictions. The can enable students to read the power encoded within educational knowledge, thereby freeing them to rethink it and challenge it.

Educators are in a powerful position to exercise agency, especially teacher educators Challenging the myth of meritocracy, so endemic and problematic in what it promised education can do, would be a welcome way to open up a debate about how economic inequality undermines equality in education. A re-engagement with critical educators, especially the work of Paulo Freire but also bell hooks and Ranciere is also overdue. This would enable a re-thinking of pedagogical practices that are so often reduced to 'banking', when educational value is reduced to test scores rather than being led by critical thinking.

If education is to be truly emancipatory it must address the deep structures of gender, class, race, disability and other oppressions within education. It is in the silences that injustices are perpetuated as much as in misrecognition or misrepresentations. In gender terms, this involves moving beyond what Noddings (2001) has termed the 'add women and stir' approach to curriculum and institutional change[xv], namely enabling or allowing women to enter leadership and curriculum design and assessment positions on male terms. Recognising the centrality of the love, care and solidarity for the survival and development of humanity, and relatedly the nature of the different care realities that comprise the relational world, is a profoundly emancipatory gendered challenge for education.

As with emancipatory education more generally, educators must be given the opportunity to study the theory and practice of emancipatory classed, raced and gender practices in their teacher education programmes. Without exposure to new thinking about liberatory practices in terms of pedagogy and curricula, teachers cannot engage with social change. While it goes without saying that any new pedagogy needs resource

investment, what is at stake as much as this is a change of intellectual and pedagogical dispositions.

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[i] This term was coined by my UCD colleague Luciana Lolich. I am most grateful for the assistance Luciana and Margaret Crean gave me in completing this paper.

[ii] This is a term used in the US that I find difficult to understand as all people have colour.

[iii] The word disability needs to be challenged as a category of identification. 'Dis' is a negative prefix in English , so to define any person or group as disabled or having a disability is to implicitly suggest they are lacking something in human ability terms. Perhaps the word should change to 'diffability', thereby recognising the enormous diversity in abilities within the human condition

[iv] As academic aptitude tests like the SAT are validated against school grades, there is complete circularity within the validation system. Aptitude tests do not so much predict attainment in a given field, rather, they confirm what learning the person has already.

[v] The Health Professions Admission Test (HPAT) are increasingly being used to determine access to elite profession such as medicine. The HPAT is used in the US, UK and Australia for assisting in selecting for entry to medicine for many years, and in Ireland since 2007. Given that these are privately-run tests, for which one has to pay to undertake and to prepare, they are also deeply class biased in this respect.

[vi] There has been and still is a low wage economy and poor labour conditions for workers in the global South for a long time. It is not a new phenomenon.

[vii] Equality of opportunity is a liberal concept. Liberal egalitarians typically define equality in terms of individuals rather than groups; while they vary between conservative liberal and left-leaning liberals, they all subscribe to the view that equality of opportunity means that people should in some sense have an equal chance to compete for social advantages. As they assume that inequality is endemic to society, equality of opportunity is about equalizing the distribution of educational (and life) chances within an unequal society. For a discussion on the difference

between liberal ideas of equality and equality of condition, see Chapter 2 of *Equality: From Theory to Action* (Baker, Lynch et al. 2004).

[viii] For Michael Young (1958) this formula was not a principle to be lauded as a fair means of operating social selection; quite the contrary, his book is an ironic critique of the idea, and of the moral judgement that would ensue from its implementation. To fail due to bad luck would be forgivable but to fail because you did not deserve to do well (lacked merit) is be held accountalbe for failure and not so easily forgiven.

[ix] The exclusive use of the male noun in the text is surprising

[x] In Ireland, Anglicisation and religious proselytizing was an explicit goal of National Schooling when first introduced by the British government in the 1830s (Coolahan 1981)

[xi] Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) refer to the cultural products offered in school as cultural arbitraries to indicate the highly arbitrary way in which they are selected and assessed. In particular, they highlighted the social class biases in what is taught, to whom, when and how.

[xii] Yet an analysis of the etymological roots of the word 'education' shows it is rooted in the Latin verb *educare* (which means to bring up, rear or raise up; this implies nurturing and care).

[xiii] For a more detailed discussion of the differences between love, care and solidarity see Lynch, 2007, Lynch et al. 2009

[xiv] Bourdieu defined doxas (in the *Outline of a Theory of Practice*) as the unspoken assumptions underpinning cultural or political practices. It refers to what is taken as self evident.

[xv] Similar issues arise deconstructing racial, social class, disability, sexuality and other biases in curriculum design.