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









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Philosophy of education in a new key: Publicness, social justice, and education; a South-North conversation

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ABSTRACT

Public education is not just a way to organise and fund education. It is also the expression of a particular ideal about education and of a particular way to conceive of the relationship between education and society. The ideal of public education sees education as an important dimension of the common good and as an important institution in securing the common good. The common good is never what individuals or particular groups want or desire, but always reaches beyond such particular desires towards that which societies as a whole should consider as desirable. This does, of course, put the common good in tension with the desires of individuals and groups. Neo-liberal modes of governance have, over the past decades, put this particular educational set up under pressure and have, according to some, eroded the very idea of the common good. This set of contributions reflects on this state of affairs, partly through an exploration of the idea of publicness itself – how it can be rearticulated and regained – and partly through reflections on the current state of education in the ‘north’ and the ‘south.’

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Introduction: Reclaiming the publicness of education

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Discussions about public education tend to approach their topic in a sociological way, where public education is seen as a form of education that is funded by public means, that is accountable to the public, and that is available to everyone. While the history of public education is manifold – public education emerged in very different ways and out of very different historical struggles in different countries and settings – many would recognise the characterisation of public education as education *of* the public, *for* the public, and *accountable to* the public.

Contemporary discussions about public education also reveal that this particular ‘set up’ is under threat. There is a significant body of literature that has been documenting the decline of public education. Part of this literature highlights the ‘inner erosion’ of public education. Here, the relentless pressure to ‘perform’ has created a situation in which alleged *indicators* of quality – such as test scores and league table positions – are taken as *definitions* of quality, which then become pursued for their own sake rather than for the sake of the good of education itself (for a chilling analysis see Ravitch, 2011). Another part of the literature focuses on the ‘outer erosion’ of public education, where the forces of marketisation, privatisation and commercialisation (see Boyask, 2020; Hogan & Thompson, 2021) literally *consume* the school, first and foremost by turning the school into an object for consumption (see Norris, 2011).

While both the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ erosion of public education tend to *disconnect* education from the publics it should serve (on this see Biesta 2019), this often happens with reference to the exact opposite, that is, the argument that education should focus on giving its publics – students, parents, communities, the economy, business, society, and so on – what they *want* (on the problems of this logic see Roberts, 2014). Yet, by focusing on what different publics *want* from the school rather than on what they might *need* (on the difference see Feinberg, 2001; Biesta, 2014a), education ends up as a private good, a ‘thing,’ orientated towards the satisfaction of private desires.

One way to respond to these developments is by reclaiming and rebuilding public education itself by ensuring that education remains available to everyone, remains funded by collective means, and seeks to be democratically accountable to the public rather than to largely privatised inspection ‘regimes.’ While this work is important, there is also an important intellectual challenge which has to do with the underlying idea of ‘publicness.’ In this piece of collective writing the authors explore the question of the publicness of education from a range of different angles, locations, and interests. In doing so we collectively seek to highlight in what ways reclaiming the publicness of education can support ongoing struggles for education as a public good rather than a private commodity.

Pluriversality and transknowledging: care, hope and love in South-North conversations of publicness in education

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There is a possibility of hope for conversations that interrogate tension between southern-pluriversalist and northern-universalist views of epistemology, ontology and cosmology. Pluriversalism has come to be associated with southern thinking, while universalist and individualistic thinking is associated with the scientific method, and increasingly centripetal discourses of the public sphere. The latter, appears disconnected from communalities of pasts, presents and futures, tracking towards individualism. This comes with unsettling turbulence, shifting centres of power and uncertain socio-economic, political and military agendas. It occurs when there are opportunities for communalities of care, hope and love (Maturana & Varela, 1992) and/or resetting frames of reference. As the second quarter of the 21st century draws closer, this may be a moment in which the intersection of key phenomena and challenges that face civil society and policy makers at local, regional and transnational levels open channels for horizontal and reciprocal knowledge exchange (Santos, 2012) or ‘transknowledging’ (Heugh et al., 2021 ftc) between south and north.

Challenges to (neo- and post-) coloniality in education systems in several tributaries of literature from Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific now swell a river of conversations and debate on what decoloniality (including in education) might mean. Santos (2012) argues that these are

anchored in resistance to discourses that bend towards an economics of globalisation and public goods. For Santos (2012, 2018) there is an abyssal line between a universalist north and a south in which pluriversality was not erased, despite coloniality and its afterlife. This is where there is no singular epistemology, ontology or cosmology. Rather southern ways of thinking and knowledge production are communal; often closely attached to place and space, ecologies of all living and non-living beings, the environment; and with chronotopes of past, presents and futures. Yet, Santos and other southern decolonial scholars (e.g. Connell, 2014; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) acknowledge that while south corresponds with post-colonial contexts, there are southern marginalities and pluriversalities in the north, just as north appears in the south. It is the possibility of what such interconnections might offer that is of interest.

These appear in parallel conversations of resistance to centripetal and universalist impulses in the public sphere and notions of publicness (e.g. Pesch, 2008), specifically in relation to what we understand of education (Biesta, 2012, 2019). Pesch (2008) distinguishes between narrow, discourses of public goods linked to economics, and those that have wider 'organic' public interest. Critique of institutionalised public education, and propositions of alternatives with wider, organic public interest in adult and community education (Biesta, 2012, 2019) seem to articulate with Maturana and Varela's communalities of care, hope and love (1992). Is it possible that a new publicness in education might draw closer to recognition and translation of sagacity and wisdom in southern communities (Santos, 2012)? Would this include transknowledging and recognition of care for living and non-living, and curatorship of environment and land (Heugh et al., 2021 *ftc*)? Might this allow an illumination of the interdependencies among 'designs for the pluriverse' (Escobar, 2018)?

Publicness of education as counterhegemonic practice

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We are thinking about the publicness of education in the context of political developments in East/Central Europe, which thirty years ago celebrated the end of Soviet-sponsored state totalitarianism. The peaceful political change exemplified in the Round Table talks in Poland or the so-called Velvet Revolution in the former Czechoslovakia, was seen as a triumph of civil society in reclaiming the public sphere from the state through deliberative democratic action (Cohen & Arato, 1992). The region's post-1989 history, referred to as the period of post-socialist transition, was at first perceived as the grand success of liberal democracy and capitalism during which the former members of the Soviet bloc joined Western democratic community. Liberal democracy, however, has come hand-in-hand with aggressive neoliberalism, which privatized vulnerable post-socialist economies and devalued people's historical identities (Krastev & Holmes, 2020). Today, many countries of the region are ruled by autocratic populist leaders, who mobilize nationalist sentiments through negative ideology vis-à-vis external and internal enemies, silence dissent and secure loyalties through oligarchical arrangements and public corruption (Heller, 2019).

What we are seeing is no longer the post-politics announced by Fukuyama (1992) as a result of the post-Cold War victory of liberal democracy. Instead, we are observing a new politization based on populist appropriation of peoples' frustrations, humiliation and distrust and the

gagging of pluralism. Public schools and universities, whose autonomy has been weakened by neoliberal educational reforms and the tightening of centralized state control, serve as important instruments in this hegemonic process of homogenization of public imaginaries and the curtailing of civic liberties (Cervinkova, 2016; Rubin & Cervinkova, 2020). What is the role of the publicness of education in this new political contexts where public education is under the ideological control of an autocratic populist state? What are the possibilities of reclaiming the publicness of education in political conditions, which undermine traditional meaning of publicness as an area of free and unrestrained discussion concerning public good (Habermas 1992, 1998)?

We propose that in the situation where “post-political” consensus on the primacy of liberal democracy does not work, it may be useful to turn to *critical democratic* tradition of public philosophy in the study of the public sphere (Tully, 2008, 2012; Foucault, 1984, 2007), which understands publicness primarily as the diversity of *practices of civic engagement*. This approach stresses the multiplicity of public spheres as irreducible characteristics of publicness. While the *critical liberal* tradition in studying the public sphere (Habermas 1992, 1998) is seeking to theoretically reconstruct the essential features of the public sphere that are present in an unfinished variety within the multiplicity of its existing forms, we see publicness as an arena of counter-hegemonic disagreement, based on probing, testing, calling into question, negotiating or modifying different aspects of the public sphere through citizens’ practices (Rosanvallon, 2008). Paying attention to practices of civic engagement based on distrust and resistance from below, whereby different groups articulate their often deeply personal demands (e.g. parents of children of disabilities struggling for access to public education) helps us see important democratic mechanisms of the new publicness that help reclaim the public sphere appropriated and dominated by hegemonic state power.

The in-between spaces; public education in local-remote aboriginal schools in Australia

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In Australia, the recent *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration* (Education Council, 2019, p.4) sets out goals for a good education in terms of ‘excellence and equity’ (goal 1) and creating ‘confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community’ (goal 2). These are broad goals that encompass social and academic education aspirations for Australian young people. But when it comes to Australia’s very remote First Nations schools (see Guenther et al., 2016), the vista of what constitutes a good education is significantly narrowed. The Mparntwe Declaration has a strong theme of ‘publicness’ that aims to strengthen individuals and enrich the community. But in remote schools, this fundamental positioning shifts to a prevailing logic of intervention to address a perceived deficit amongst a certain cohort of young people in comparison to the rest of the nation (the public). This policy platform is known as *Closing the Gap* (closingthegap.gov.au) and shifts the markers of a good education towards narrow measures of educational attainment, an impulse that is observed in many other countries (Biesta, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Previous *Closing the Gap* targets relating to school attendance, baseline testing in English language literacy and numeracy and year 12 completion have been refreshed to include targets relating to early childhood enrolment rates, attainment of tertiary qualifications, and youth engagement figures. The discord between the nation’s statement of public education aspirations and the policy and pedagogical frame that is applied to remote First Nations young people

represents significantly different ideologies applied in the provision of education across the public diaspora.

There is one target within the current Closing the Gap policies that has potential to strengthen the education aims of equity, creativity, confidence, lifelong learning and community action (see Education Council, 2019, p.4) in remote First Nations schools. This is *Target 16* which aims for an '...increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.'

Curiously, the achievement of this goal has not been linked explicitly to education but presents an opportunity to 'close the gap' between public education aspirations and the logic and language of intervention as it is applied to remote First Nations students. More than a decade on, a remote education model that hoped to leapfrog remote students closer to the rest of the nation in attendance rates, baseline literacy and numeracy test scores and school completion, has yielded a few positive trends but overall, has been frustratingly disappointing. Important questions of how First Nations students can develop confidence, creativity, excellence, and demonstrate informed community action must reshape the nature of education in remote Australian schools. Is a student who shines with confidence and creativity in their first language and strengthens the community in a local-remote (Guenther et al., 2017) to be considered a public education success? If public education values equity, as stated, then there are possibilities to close the gap between the assumptions and policies that currently underpin unequal applications of public education.

Public education for children with special educational needs: Segregation to internal exclusion?

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In this contribution public education is conceptualized as education which concerns itself with the creation of a society in which all children and their families feel included and valued. Public education is rooted in the collective or common good; It serves all of the public and is a space where people are treated equally, but with due regard for difference. This contribution will focus on public education for children with special educational needs (SEN), whom have always occupied a position on the margins of society in Ireland. The historical context will be used to examine the emergence of a public education in Irish Society, as we have it today.

The emergence of a public education is rooted in adverse reactions to an education system which provides for some and segregates others. Segregation in the education system in Ireland can be traced back to the 1960s when a Department of Health Commission was established to examine 'the problem of mental handicap' (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011). Education for children with SEN was not carried out with their peers as it was seen as "detrimental to the education of others" (DES, 1936). Consequently, *segregation* was being used as a means of intervention to protect, and contain the threat from, those who were 'other than' or different to 'mainstream' society.

Arising from questions of institutionalization and segregation, the 1990s Inclusion Movement saw concerted moves to include children in mainstream schools against a backdrop of 'normalisation'. Linking normalization to integration in this way means that education was designed to ensure conformity to a predetermined norm of behaviour. Recognizing differences appropriately has led to efforts to provide education that is inclusive, stressing common citizenship and a shared or public education. Whilst it may seem straightforward to include those with SEN who were previously marginalised from education, it is now a conflicted process at a time

when the heart of public education is being gauged out and replaced by the emptiness and greed of neoliberalism. The academicization of Irish Schools is evident, with an increasing emphasis on standardisation and outcomes-based education, test-based accountability as well as corporate forms of school management (Skerritt, 2019). Ireland, is experiencing a new educational orthodoxy; whilst education is meant to be for the common good, education is increasingly becoming a commodity, a private good in a competitive market place. Neoliberal policy discourses shift the focus of teachers care away from the student with SEN and performative pressures on teachers and students are contributing to rather than ameliorating 'segregation' in our society (Wilkins, 2015).

Whilst those who occupied the margins of the education system have been integrated to mainstream, there have been many examples of maintaining practices that exclude them, resulting in internal exclusion (Young, 2000), as against the external exclusion they suffered previously. Has their move to a more 'public' education, led to children with SEN now occupying a position on the margins of a mainstream education rather than that of a valued member of their school community? 21st Century Public Education needs to be reclaimed for the good of children with SEN and their families. Does the answer lie in a truly inclusive school system which reflects a democratic philosophy whereby all schools, special and mainstream are valued – where as Merrigan and Joyce (2021) suggest the special school sector needs to emerge with an equal position on the continuum of educational provision?

Public pedagogies, publicness and 'affective atmospheres' in ITE

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We are interested in how the force of collective affects or 'affective atmospheres' have narrowed the publicly declared purposes of initial teacher education (ITE). An assemblage of accountability and regulatory measures has resulted in prescribed curriculum content and accountability requirements that limit the educative purposes and practices of ITE programs (Cochran-Smith, 2021). This contrasts with deep, generative conceptions of education that are concerned with education for democracy, equity and the common good. These conflicting visions of education generate tensions between publicly produced 'affective atmospheres' around the capabilities of teachers and the potential within ITE for examining the complexity of the publicness of education.

Significant in understanding the ways in which collective affects have force in animating and circulating policies and practices in ITE, is recognising the relationality and constitutive forces of collective affective life (Zembylas, 2020). Of importance is attending to how such atmospheres produce common-sense notions, policies and approaches towards education and teaching as individualistic and a private good. It follows that attending to how such climates are produced and their impacts has a potential to disrupt performative and individualistic norms within ITE. This potential extends to ITE becoming a space within which pre-service educators are supported in questioning and negotiating competing tensions around the purposes and practices of education in critical and constructive ways.

Ongoing political and media agendas also substantiate deficit claims about teacher quality and create public uncertainty about ITE. At the same time there is rising 'affective despair' and concomitant mass responses to public 'shocks' (Sellar, 2015) in relation to environmental, raced and gendered concerns. These collective concerns and issues are integral to the role of education as a public good. Public affective responses represent a human coming togetherness that is at odds with a climate of distrust about the role of education and teachers established through

the dominant policy coherence around ITE (Anderson, 2014). Education is publicly charged with addressing these issues, however, ITE programs are constrained within instrumental orientations which remove possibilities for taking these matters seriously and critically. Following Biesta (2014b), if ITE is to take up these matters, there is an urgency for pedagogies in the interests of publicness that work ‘at the *intersection* of education and politics’ (p.23 italics in original). That is, ‘a concern for the public quality of human togetherness’ (p.23) and hence, different forms of affective life (Anderson, 2014). We suggest, these forms of affective life recognise the importance of different ways knowing, doing and being.

A focus on affective life represents a significant shift towards practices and approaches in ITE that engage with the publicness of responses to societal issues. Such practices are informed by and activate an assemblage of affect, embodiment and relationality (Sandlin et al., 2017). They also contribute to reimagining ITE programs as spaces that develop capacities and willingness to constantly put into question the publicness and affective conditions of education. While the demands of different ways of thinking, doing, and being are challenging, we contend this provides means for attending to the force and impact of affective atmospheres. At stake is reclaiming and reframing the role of ITE in the interests of public education as a common good.

Education’s publicness needs to be set free! a sophist resistance to domination and dehumanisation

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The Sophists made education and teaching possible as change for anyone and, therefore, made democracy possible. They made education into a condition for democracy. Because of their idea of educating anyone, Plato demonised them; for him one could only inherit one’s place and role in society. Aristotle dehumanised the Sophists in the light of science as first philosophy, as Plato and Aristotle aspired “to *dominate* education” (Jaeger 1943/1986, p. 138; my emphasis).

Sophists where democrats for which equality is foundational. Equality, as Rancière (1991) reminds us, can only be verified; it is *not* to come, since that would make inequality foundational while equality is deferred and dispersed into the future and may never arrive. Equality in education and teaching is rather an *intervention* by verification into fixed reproductions of inequality. Verification of equality is an intervention into aristocratic principles in education and teaching, as such principles are founded on the violent Platonian/Aristotelian domination of education and teaching (see Säfström, 2021).

The Sophists were not interested in ideas as eternal and separated from everyday life (Rorty, 1980), but considered the spatial-temporal world in which we live as embodying educational thought. Education and teaching were about ‘how to move’ in a world of others. Educational theory, as introduced by the Sophists, is not beyond and above the world, not about implementing a perfect sphere of ideas in a perfect state. Education is of the world and concerns how to move in this world we share with others. That is the essentially plural space created through education. *Paideia* is for the Sophists ethical and political to its core, and education is therefore essentially ethical and political. The ethical and political aim for education is to expand the publicness of public life – anyone can be taught – not to restrict and exclude.

Sophist education was, in principle, about a liveable life for anyone and not just for some. Judith Butler (2015, 2020) shows how liveable life today concerns just the few. She shows how the people get separated from the population, in which the former is understood as embodying politically, socially and culturally meaningful and liveable lives. In contrast, the population refers to simple bodies populating a nation, without being considered as wholly belonging to the

people of that nation and whose lives therefore are disposable, and can be treated as, in Zygmunt Bauman's (2004) words, 'waste'.

I argue that we need to write against this violent and aggressive distinction in cultural, political and social life as expressed through the Platonian/Aristotelian domination of education. To resist education as a process of division and exclusion, of narrowing down access to the public, also means to resist the Platonian/Aristotelian obsession with education and the patterns of domination and dehumanisation that follow, and to set Sophist education free for anyone in an expanding public life.

Reimagining the 'publics' and 'publicness of education': a transnational social field lens

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The 'publicness of education' is defined as seeing our schools and universities as fulfilling its function for advancing social equity for all. Yet, in today's world, the acceleration of globalisation means that the scope and nature of the 'publics' and the 'publicness of education' have a new transnational reality. Sociologists, who are engaged in migration studies, are now recognizing that the social processes of migrants to their host society are more fluid because of their increased cross-border interactions and activities. This can generate nuanced insights into the dynamic ways in which social, cultural and economic flows and processes can affect the construction of identities and belongings of the 'publics' – including migrants and non-migrants alike – in negotiating the social and transnational spaces within which the 'publicness of education' reside. The question is: how will transnational social field, as a guiding concept, help us rethink both the 'inner' and 'outer' erosion of public education that tend to contribute to the breakdown of education in serving the 'publics'?

A transnational social field is defined as 'an unbounded terrain of interlocking ... networks that extend across the borders of two or more nation-states and that incorporates its participants in the day-to-day activities of social reproduction in these various locations' (Fouon & Glick Schiller, 2001, p. 544). Viewing the nature of the 'publics' from the lens of transnational social fields allows educators to imagine the 'publicness' of education beyond 'the physical locale and geography of the mind' (Gargano, 2009, p. 331). Importantly, transnational social fields as a lens is useful for describing how uneven mobilities are produced under transnational conditions (Massey, 2005), and are inseparable from the ways that class, gender, ethnicity and nationality interact with the control systems (eg. education) that reproduce contemporary social inequality. It thus avoids Beck's (2007) critique of methodological nationalism which limit explanations of 'public education' as eroding within the confines of the nation state. In this sense, by paying close attention to how structures and power reformulate one's ways of being and ways of belonging, which emerge from linkages, networks, and institutions forged by migrants across borders (Levitt & Levitt Schiller, 2006); it too addresses the 'publicness of education' as a border-work of connecting those who 'get in' and 'get on' (Biesta, 2019). This, in turn, will provide different explanations of the complex social, cultural and political issues that erode the notion of 'publics', particularly those caught in the backlash against multiculturalism in Europe (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010) or racial discrimination in Australia (Chin, 2021). By introducing the transnational lens implies a change of valuation of the 'publics', and present important insights into the 'public education of the public, for the public, and accountable to the public' (Biesta, in this volume). In light of this, new avenues of reimagining the 'publics' participating the 'publicness of education' are made possible when one considers new complexities of diversity, the structures and policies that frame the transnational social field.

What might education look like in a gender-neutral space?

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This contribution explores the processes and relationships of an education system that appears, on the surface, to be gender neutral. Emanating from discussions with colleagues about the concepts of silencing, power, pushing back and indigenous ways of knowing, this piece proposes that the 'publicness' we strive for in education is, in fact, a gender-neutral space. A gendered understanding challenges the very constitution of the macropicture. Human beings live in affective relational realities and have emotional ties that compel them to act as moral agents (Lolich et al., 2018). Yet, this is at odds with an education system that has become a site of competition, competitiveness, and comparison between and across borders. This establishes an environment that effectively corrodes any sense of mutual care, community, or solidarity among teachers. It does this by eroding motivation and the ability to act, to respond, and to oppose. This not only transforms the conduct of schools and the identities of those within the school (Apple, 2018; Ozga, 2017), but also encourages binary modes of thinking and a common culture of acceptance, conformity and obedience to the prevailing order.

Turning to the gendered qualities of the education system, this paper seeks to understand the complex and often contradictory processes, forces and relationships that are both out of the control of those it is imposed upon and simultaneously shaped and redefined by these very people and the spaces they work in. Taking its cue from Joan Acker's (1990; 2004) focus on bodied processes and practices and how they expose systems of hierarchies within and through organisations, this paper examines the gendered qualities of globalisation and its impact on education. A gendered reading of education is not about tacking women's stories onto or "even 'stirred into' the macropicture", as Freeman (2001) outlines, but it seeks to understand the relationships, processes and power that structure education and helps us to better grapple with the essence of what is and what could be. It seeks to answer two key questions: how does integrating gender make visible the causes and consequences of a deep indifference to the social act(s) of education? What might education look like in a gender-neutral space?

In this 'neo-liberal moment', as Woolley et al. (2018) terms it, gender is readily understood at local level. Yet, on a global scale there is a general acceptance of the naturalness of neo-liberal masculine discourses that shapes educational policies and practices. It is assumed that self-interest and competitiveness are the energies of creativity (Apple, 2013), providing fertile ground to restructure social identities, gender relations and social relations. Taking gender seriously adds to the analysis of this volume and gives rise to new understandings. This contribution draws on the works of Joan Acker, Heidi Gottfried, Carla Freeman and Kathleen Lynch among others.

Eco-Publicness and the pursuit of eco-justice pedagogy

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Australia, the US and many EU countries face significant challenges in the pursuit of schooling toward pedagogies for a balanced and sustainable planet. We are interested in three factors that contribute to the marginalization of ecojustice and culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) in schools: (a) a persistence of a faulty hegemonic definition of 'ecology' born from western

industrial culture, (b) too little teaching connecting with placed based plural knowledges from diverse groups, and (c) the need for educational reforms that reflect ecojustice and CRP ideas to position teachers and students as local knowledge producers to effect global ecological trends. Globally, over the last two decades, attention to ecojustice pedagogy for science and mathematics in public schools have largely been marginalised and supplanted by neoliberal curricula and pedagogy models of school reform to homogenise and standardise children.

Compounding the school science problem according to Martusewicz et al. (2010) is the normative definition of 'ecology' born in late nineteenth century rooted in old western industrial culture that led to the environmental destruction. Schooling and science are foundational for learning to protect the environment and must move beyond these narrow definitions toward investigating existing cultural and ecological problem-solving commons in other diverse world cultures that offer ways of living more sustainably. Eco-justice principles to underpin a transdisciplinary and sustainability approach to science and mathematics education include imaging preferred futures, nature education, connections to place, activism and prioritising of culturally responsive pedagogies (Paige et al., 2016). It is about fairness within generations, fairness between generations and fairness between species. Emergent ecojustice philosophy and pedagogy pursues a framework for teachers entering science, mathematics and social studies that 'merges social and environmental justice theories by emphasizing physical, spiritual, and affective connections between an environment and social groups' (Tippins & Britton, 2015).

It is also concerned with engagement with alternative ontological and epistemological knowledge frameworks including those of Indigenous groups that acknowledge the interconnectedness of nature to humans. Ecological issues are seen closely related to rights, democracy inclusion and equity in relation to non-Western cultures to prevent unjust colonisation of Indigenous land and economic prosperity. Bowers (2002), Mueller and Tippins (2011), and Sachs (1995) advocate ecojustice philosophy in schools to rupture old habits and ecological limits to nurture students local ecological decision-making skills.

We are interested in the confluence of ecojustice and culturally responsive pedagogy and the rich combinations and sequences both offer classroom teachers for student led, eco-focused, relational dialogue in school settings. Both pedagogies used simultaneously leverage ecological and cultural systems for learning. Culturally responsive educators link to learning the cultural and prior knowledges of students to improve their lives (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, Gay, 2002, Rigney, 2021). Teachers capturing and bridging student ecological lived experiences, traditions and cultural knowledge introduce a framework for environmental awareness and behaviour change. Ecojustice can become simplified or trivialised in simplistic terms of 'cultural celebration' unlinked to academic learning for ecological change. This is exacerbated in schools dominated by the fragmented and superficial treatment of diversity and culture ways of knowing that currently prevails. Bringing into dialogue CRP with ecojustice allows public school teachers to capture and cultivate student environmental common knowledge while repositioning students as producers of science toward ecological decisions for change.

As pointed out by Tippins and Britton (2015:362) 'ultimately, for schools in the twenty-first century to capture the meaningful purposes of educational reforms that reflect ecojustice philosophy, teachers and students must be repositioned as producers of science and participants in ecological decisions'. We claim that Ecojustice when placed in dialogue with culturally responsive pedagogies allows teachers to validate and bridge from local funds of knowledges toward sustainability action that moves beyond 'ecology' rooted in western dominated logics that positions humans separate from nature. Ecological well-being begins with school publicness to improve eco-publicness that encourages learning inclusion, diversity, participation and action by multiple parties.

The 'publicness' of education through a bioecological lens

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The theoretical work of Urie Bronfenbrenner has a well-established history as a conceptual lens through which to view education (Hayes et al., 2017). Unfortunately, however, his early work on contextual influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) often eclipses his richer later theories, incorporating culture and personal characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) and the power of interpersonal relationships (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). (For an overview of the evolution of bioecological theory and how it is often misused, see Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Tudge et al., 2009; 2016). Drawing from across the evolution of bioecological theory can elucidate the 'publicness' of education through a social-justice lens; Bronfenbrenner was a 'scholar activist' who emphasised the responsibility of academics to work to ameliorate society (Hayes et al., 2017).

The bioecological concept of the 'mesosystem' emphasises the multiplicity of contexts within which human-beings live and shows that different 'microsystems' operate under different religious, moral, behavioural and social norms. Therefore, a multitude of narratives is continually negotiated and renegotiated regarding who learners are within potentially contrasting roles, relationships, expectations and experiences, and educational settings function symbolically and practically as 'public' spaces where these potentially opposing narratives collide (O'Toole et al., 2019). Cultural values are operationalised in education through practice, curricula and national standards but often the dominant discourse becomes so all-encompassing that these underlying values go unrecognised (Moss, 2017). Those whose cultural values do not match the dominant discourse may risk exclusion or may struggle to achieve (Ó Breacháin & O'Toole, 2013). This raises questions around whose values should underpin a public education system.

Yet, the nuances around this are underlined by another bioecological concept, 'proximal processes', or interactions and relationships, which are posited as the engines of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Through this lens, process is more important than structural or outcomes-based quality for education, but in the context of global neoliberalism, a 'closing-the-gap' mentality for public education can instead emerge (Urban, 2015). An illustrative example is Early Childhood Education and Care in Ireland, which is largely outsourced to private providers operating under a neoliberal discourse in which professional agency is limited by external inspection, and parents are viewed as consumers (Moloney et al., 2019). Competing to meet parental wishes, often valuing 'school-readiness' rather than recognising the rights of young children to play (Brooker & Woodhead, 2013), positions ECEC as a private endeavour, the first step on a lifelong road whereby parents with means purchase the rewards of high performance for their children, and those whose parents do not have the capacity (financial and otherwise) to do so may 'sink or swim'.

In establishing Head Start in the 1960s, Bronfenbrenner recognised the crucial role of a public system of ECEC as the first stage of a public educational continuum. He sought to understand the complexity of human development and build this understanding into public policy, arguing that the support of entire societies is necessary to raise children successfully (Hayes et al., 2017). This remains a worthy aim for those studying the 'publicness of education' today.

Towards a politics of truth for education studies

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Philosophical investigations are urgently required to diagnosis and critique contemporary education policy. Critique here refers to investigations into ‘the limits that are imposed on us and experiment[s] with the possibility of going beyond them’ (Foucault, 1984, p. 50). Such critique is urgent because of the drastic failure of the *Global Education Reform Movement* (GERM) (Ball, 2012; Sahlberg, 2011)—that régime of truth that now operates as ‘a global orthodoxy in education policy’ (Fuller & Stevenson, 2019). Teachers, schools and leaders now are being fitted up with the ‘truth’ of good practice as defined by the GERM, that I understand as an assemblage of neoliberalising policy dictates, in collaboration with a version of educational ‘science’, framed up as ‘what works’ (Biesta, 2007). This regime of truth, asserts a rationality for governing that is Teflon coated, has a huge machine that drives it and defends it, and today appears to be immune to any critique.

But critique can be understood to be of two kinds. On the one hand, we are all engaged in discerning what is true and what is false. But when we engage with that game of truth, we get sucked into critique that is trapped within the logic of the prevailing orthodoxy. On that terrain, critique rightly points out that the policy fails. The regime asserts we need evidence-based policy but then there is overwhelming evidence that the key logics of the regime don’t work. School devolution policy is subsumed by a one-size-fits-all logic that, cannot account for local context. Parental choice policies are increasingly detrimental to the public provision of schooling as it exacerbates the residualisation of public schools. Standardisation of curriculum pushes teachers to take up highly scripted forms of pedagogy that are unsuited to local needs, especially in schools serving high poverty communities. And high stakes testing pushes teachers towards narrow and unproductive definitions of what counts as literacy and numeracy. But then arguing over ‘matters of fact’ (Latour, 2004, p.231) don’t seem to have any traction in unsettling the GERM.

Alternatively, critique can focus on investigations into how truth itself is authorised, how what counts as truth now gets to hold sway, in what is always a heterogenous field of claims. Such critique offers a politics of truth instead (Foucault, 1980; 1997). A politics of truth here ponders the question: What types of knowledge are you trying to disqualify when you say you that you are a science? (Foucault, 2003, p. 10). Such a mode of analysis notes that the GERM rightly asserts truth through claims to science, but then educational policy truths are framed up inside of a version of ‘science’ or a narrow scientism that asserts a decontextualising, technicist, quantitative version of social science. And in the name of that ‘science’, disqualifies other crucial knowledge including a huge archive of qualitative studies, and the ‘practical wisdom’ of teachers. The regime defends its claims to truth by engaging in a *science war* (Lather, 2010), a war over what constitutes ‘science’, and by war here, I refer to a zero sum game over what counts as science and hence the truth about education. As a zero sum game, we witness an archive politics; the truth about education is now represented in a narrowly defined archive. Against educational scientism, a politics of truth argues for a mode of inquiry that refuses to internalise those logics of marketisation that treat us all as completely autonomous and responsible for every aspect our lives and engages in an ‘*insurrection of subjugated knowledges*’ (Foucault, 2003, p. 7).

Philosophy of education in a new key: publicness, social justice, and education; a South-North conversation

Michael A. Peters (Open Review)

It is timely and important to revisit the idea of the concept of the public in relation to education and society – an ideal that immediately harks back to its Latin roots in *publicus*, and recalls its situational logic with John Dewey in the 1930s and more recently Habermas’ discourse of the public sphere and its structural transformation first developed in the 1960s. Gert Biesta’s superb collection addresses a new set of relationships in a south-north conversation that explores ideas of publicness, social justice and education, some might argue an indissoluble network. Biesta

rightly to my mind calls for a reclamation of the ideal especially in relation to questions of accountability – ‘public education as education of the public, for the public, and accountable to the public.’ Kathleen Heugh examines pluriversality and transknowledging, exploring ‘tensions between southern-pluriversalist and northern-universalist views of epistemology, ontology and cosmology’. She talks also of ‘transknowledging’ as the reciprocal knowledge exchange between south and north. Hana Cervinkova discusses the publicness of education as a counterhegemonic practice to critically interrogate populist appropriations of public education and its patriotic washing of history, law and democracy. These useful theoretical lens gives way to a number of examples of what has previously been on the margins – ‘the in-between spaces’ of remote Aboriginal schools in Australia (Sam Osborne), the segregation and ‘inclusion’ of children with special needs (Deirdre Forde), ‘affective atmospheres’ in ITE (Alison Wrench & Jenni Carter). Carl Anders Säfström proposes a Sophist defence of the publicness of education (against Plato and Aristotle) as a condition for education based on everyday life rather than eternalist ideals—a concept anchor in the ethical and political concept of the *Paideia*. (I found this case both disturbing and convincing!). Hannah Soong discusses ‘publics’ as a transnational social field lens understand mobilities across borders that are inseparable class, gender, ethnicity and nationality and are involved in the reproduction of social inequalities.

Suzanne O’Keeffe asks ‘What might education look like in a gender-neutral space?’ and Kathryn Paige & Lester-Irabinna Rigney examine ‘Eco-Publicness and the pursuit of eco-justice pedagogy’, both pursuing new directions in the exploration and defence of the concept. A bio-ecological lens provides us with a tool to understand ‘the multiplicity of contexts within which human-beings live and shows that different ‘microsystems’ operate under different religious, moral, behavioural and social norms’ (Leah O’Toole) and in ‘Towards a politics of truth for education studies’ Robert Hattam utilises a form of critique that question the neoliberal truth-regime of global education policy as operates as the orthodoxy. This group of mini-essays are strongly suggestive of alternative logics of inclusion that in an expansive way recognises emerges social movements and groups rights in their access not only to public education but also to the constitution of the public in a neoliberal era now dominated by forms of populism, patriotism, and far-right parties.

Publicness circa 2021; the view from Aotearoa New Zealand (open review)

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The Philosophy in a New Key series, started by Peters et al. (2020), encourages educational thinkers to address issues and to discuss the state of the discipline from various perspectives and geographical locations. Biesta and colleagues entered a debate on publicness, social and education as something that is not to be considered as transactional or direct but rather speaking to the higher ideal of what education is or could be, and in doing so engaging with tensions arising from a common good vs individual needs debate. In a certain way it speaks back to some of the other collective writings in the philosophy of education in a new key writings series (Jackson et al., 2020; Orchard et al., 2020 and Waghid et al., 2020).

The inner and outer erosion of public education and the claim for a public education is at the heart of what Biesta and colleagues conceptualise, as Biesta eloquently puts it, as the “important intellectual challenge which has to do with the underlying idea of ‘publicness’”. In fact, the whole South-North conversation is filled with beautiful and aesthetic statements that make an axiological claim. Heugh writes about publicness in education in terms of ‘pluriversality’ as surviving alongside colonial past; “this is where there is no singular epistemology, ontology or cosmology; rather southern ways of thinking and knowledge production are communal” she tells us. Cervinkova and Rasiński, writing about Central Europe’s troubled 20th century past (and the so-

called post-socialist challenge), argue that they witness and conceptualise “publicness primarily as the diversity of *practices of civic engagement*”. Osborne takes public education to the indigenous lands of Australia, and explores the ‘Closing the Gap’ policies with their unintended consequences. As they say, “If public education values equity, as stated, then there are possibilities to close the gap between the assumptions and policies that currently underpin unequal applications of public education”. Powerful work. Forde focuses on argument on special needs in the public eye, where, as she argues, “The emergence of a public education is rooted in adverse reactions to an education system which provides for some and segregates others”, questioning the positioning of children with special needs in (mainstream) societies. Wrench and Carter in their analysis of affective atmospheres in relation to the initial teacher education argue that there is a “rising ‘affective despair’ and concomitant mass responses to public ‘shocks’”, in relation to the concern of public education, and as they further argue, in order to negotiate the ‘urgency for pedagogies in the interests of publicness’. Säfström’s argument confronts classical philosophy in order to ‘set Sophist education free for anyone in an expanding public life’, as he navigated Plato’s and Aristotle’s thinking; and Sophist education/resistance. Soong is concerned with ‘publicness in education’ and transnational social fields; while O’Keeffe calls for taking gender seriously in the educational space. Paige & Rigney are responsive to and argue for “the confluence of ecojustice and culturally responsive pedagogy and the rich combinations and sequences both offer classroom teachers for student led, eco-focused, relational dialogue in school settings”. Finally, O’Toole considers ‘publicness’ via a bioecological lens, while Hattam caps the collection with his politics of truth and call for a particular new form of inquiry. This South- North Conversation is one of the strongest papers and collectives that hits the Philosophy with the ‘left’ and ‘right’ key equally strong and convincing.

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