

CHALLENGING BIAS IN ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION DISCOURSES: EMANCIPATORY 'DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION' IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

ABSTRACT

This paper uses a critical framework integrating Capability, Feminist and Critical Pedagogic theories to challenge the reductive focus within sustainability discourses on the physical environment, and education's typical 'development' focus on economic growth. The paper presents three main arguments. First, it argues for holistic or ecological concepts of both 'development' and ESD, focusing on enlightened political participation, emancipation and social transformation as the basis of ecological sustainability. Second, it challenges the limitation of such agendas to wealthy countries while 'development education' thinking applied to poorer countries is almost entirely economic. Third, it explores the political educational mandate that flows from this position. The three arguments are developed by examining successes and shortcomings in emancipatory educational projects in South Africa, Latin America and the Arab world. These projects, previously documented, are analysed using comparative 'glocalization' tools to reveal context-specific ways that innovative vertical and horizontal collaboration has created responsive new forms of educationally-mediated politically sustainable 'development' – focusing on equality, particularly gender. The analysis shows that educating for ecologically sustainable development based on enlightened and equal political participation has no less a place in 'developing' countries than it does in richer ones although constraints, and therefore means, may be situationally distinctive.

INTRODUCTION

This paper subjects the many levels of tension between the three agendas yoked together in the 'Education for Sustainable Development' (ESD) construct by first arguing, as others have done in different ways, that inequality is inherently *unsustainable* and that education needs therefore to focus on building equality. While ecofeminist discourses tend to link arguments for social and gender equality in terms of its environmental benefits, I argue here that social inequality is *inherently* un-ecological and therefore unsustainable in itself. The paper further challenges the assumptions underpinning both ESD discourses (at state or NGO levels) *and* the multi-level dualism of supposedly more ecological and emancipatory approaches to 'Educating for Sustainability' (EfS) that equality-focused, grassroots approaches are really a luxury enjoyed only by wealthy countries. It does this by showing innovative and context-specific developing country examples of *integrated* policy and grassroots action for combined economic *and* social justice where education is central to both ends and means.

These positions on the problematic assumptions of ESD have been edged towards in different ways from a few directions. The relatively new field of Sustainability Science, for instance, reflects its championing of ecology as interdependence in its preference for the non-'development' framed Education for Sustainability (EfS) rather than ESD. The movement as a whole also inclines to the view that powerful linguistic norming within ESD rhetoric and policies have masked lack of actual attention to socio-economic and geo-political matters of distribution and participation (Komiya and Takeuchi, 2006). In fact, the relative positions of sustainability, education and development have long been a point of debate within global Sustainability discourses, and there has certainly been consistent challenge to limited views of 'development education' as simply a matter of increasing national GDPs,

filling manpower shortfalls and eradicating 'absolute' poverty. To some extent, these discourses draw on influential arguments for re-focusing sustainable development campaigning, in different ways, towards issues of justice and equality (Jackson, 2009/17; Sandel, 2009; Salleh, 1997; Scerri, 2009), and towards the importance of *educating* about these and about the responsibility to make a difference (Dewey, 1916; Friere, 1973/2009; Giroux, 2014; Stromquist, 2004).

But good instincts notwithstanding, these movements fall short in the sense that, "...micropolitics has failed to challenge macropolitics ... preventing ... ESD ... from uniting educationally moral purposes of social justice with radical democracy." (Ellis, 2016:37). While the cause of this limitation has been attributed to both active and passive shortcomings, in the forms of both hegemonic rhetorical norming and lack of attention to real re-distribution, this paper offers another perspective. First, I argue that both governments and NGOs have tended to *contrast* policy-led with supposedly 'alternative' (or grassroots) development. Second, with a few exceptions (which I discuss here), their arguments have focused on what are widely known as 'developed', OECD or wealthy countries. In terms of the educational dimension, 'developing' countries are typically seen as facing a different set of challenges, in which the need for *economic* development outweighs both the need and possibility of also attending to its human (cultural and political) aspects. Yet at a time when the resurgence of protest politics and grassroots movements has combined with the global disruption of old geopolitical certainties, *all* countries are impacted by the negative effects of reductively competitive education policies that ignore this part of the educational mandate.

Such dualism has been challenged before; I have written about alternatives in such contexts to competitive notions of development, alternatives that keep in mind values, changing local needs and the public good in responding to global change. Specifically, I have criticised the opposition of policy-led and supposedly 'alternative' development, arguing for an approach to development where grassroots activism is located *within* the policy mandate itself (author, 2010; author, 2017). However, there is considerable work to be done to *theorize* a holistic view of development with enlightened political participation and equality at its centre, particularly outside the discourse's own assumptions and in order to facilitate its application beyond its liberal left-wing Anglophone epicentre. Therefore, it is to address this need for better empirical and theoretical understanding of possibilities that this paper develops the 'sustainability', 'feminist' and geo-political aspects of such an ecological view of education's role with what might be seen as a 'structuration' focus on relationships between structure and actors (Giddens, 1984), in order to illustrate possibilities for grassroots and government actors to cooperate in using education to overcome constraints and create genuinely responsive, glocalized new forms of development sustainable in these terms – 'even' in developing countries.

The paper is structured in two main parts. The first part develops the arguments, drawing *inter alia* on both critical sociology and NGO critiques of vested interest use of 'sustainability' rhetoric and competitive growth as inherently un-sustainable (Jackson, 2009; Ellis, 2016; Scerri, 2012; Transition United States, 2013), and the ways these ideas are also incorporated, with varying emphases, into feminist and sub-political theories (Kaldor, 2003; Salleh, 1997; Lister, 1997; Stevenson, 2011). I critique the blind-spot in these anti-capitalist arguments, that despite their intended equality and grassroots-localization credentials, they largely overlook developing countries. And I explore the broader *political* educational mandate that flows from this discussion, discussing both how an ecological view of sustainability incorporates a notion of the human 'capability' required to challenge the unequal and exploitative forms of capitalism that also act as impediments to such a mandate (Sen, 1999i & 1999ii; Friere, 1970, 1973, 2000; Dewey, 1916 & 1937), as well as the ways this can be even more important yet harder to come-by in contexts of heightened socio-political marginalisation (Nussbaum, 2000 & 2013; Stromquist, 2004, 2006 & 2015; Unterhalter, 2003 & 2007; Dietz, 1985; Enslin, 2003; Mouffe, 1992). Seemingly important questions emerge around the precise relationships between emancipatory education and underlying socio-political structure.

In the second part, therefore, I explore the unique insights into these processes and relationships provided by looking closely at educational innovations over the past quarter century across a range of rapidly 'developing' countries, from Latin America, through early post-apartheid South Africa, and to ongoing socio-political and educational innovation in the Arab World. In this, I use specific explications of glocalization theory (Robertson, 1992 & 1995; Drori et al, 2014) to facilitate analysis on various levels of interplay: of context-specific constraints, impediments, aims and needs, structure and agency, state and grassroots actors, and both horizontal and vertical learning processes. I conclude that these diverse forms of educationally-mediated, emancipatory change not only confirm

the short-sightedness of limiting political-ecological visions of education to wealthy countries, but they also provide examples for the rest of the world in these challenging times of how re-thinking educational assumptions (in terms of both ends and means including the nature of alliances) can help to overcome structural barriers to progress.

THE CONNECTED AND CONTESTED TERRAINS OF DEVELOPMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUALITY

This paper broadens out relationships between 'ecological' and other sub-political discourses, beyond ecofeminism's environmental *raison-d'être* towards one where equality is seen as the basis of ecology and therefore sustainability, by initially excavating the construction of these terms and the overlooked links and tensions between them. For a start, despite popular depictions of ecological movements like Greenham Common and Greenpeace as the 'radical fringe' of the sustainability cause, activism and change have also begun to appear as central threads to mainstream sustainable development frameworks. For instance, the UNDP's Millennium Development Goals cited *environmental* sustainability as just one of eight 'change' goals that included eradicating poverty, education, gender equality, reducing child mortality, maternal health, combatting disease, and global cooperation over 'development' (UNDP, 2000). Furthermore, their re-branding in 2015 as 'Sustainable Development Goals', to "build on the MDGs and complete what they did not achieve", was explained as a rejection of the false division between environmental and human sustainability: "They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental". (UN, 2015:1). And the same UN 'sustainability' publication goes on to cite the eradication of inequalities as prime among these imperatives, with a focus on gender: "... gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls" (UN, 2015:1).

However, it is also argued that widespread awareness and explicit state advocacy of 'sustainability' is undercut by *policies*, even at an international NGO level, that, "...generally do not attempt any supportive linkages between macro and micro conditions of women." (Stromquist, 2015:320). And at state level, as I show here in relation to sustainability's educational aspect, it can be seen that the *implementation* of sustainability-related ideals minimises both the change and social or human foci in favour of responsabilising messages about conservation and good or 'green' householding. In relation to both (national and supranational levels), it has been argued that the privileging of private morality over collective action is not mere inadequacy but actually a form of hegemonic norming, aimed at preventing communal engagement around important political issues such as unquestioning government commitment to competitive growth (Scerri, 2012).

It is these sorts of critical perspectives on the partial and vested-interest deployment of 'sustainability' that have led to the 'sustainability *science*' emphasis on interdependence, where the institutional, human and political dimensions of *social* sustainability are pre-requisites to the sustainability of our *physical* environment (Komiya and Takeuchi, 2006). The impacts of today's cross-cutting economic, security-related and political tensions have also begun to galvanise new supranational movements such as the Transition Movement and the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP), which seek in complementary ways to rectify the ongoing prioritisation of vested-interest 'environmentalism'. The Transition Movement was established initially to prepare for life after the depletion of oil, the movement has expanded its scope to economic as well as environmental sustainability, in which it sees cultural citizenship and community activism as central (Stevenson, 2012; Transition United States, 2013). CUSP is similarly committed to grassroots activism in communicating the importance of understanding interdependence, but more focused on re-positioning the concept of 'prosperity' away from 'abundance' towards a more holistic form of public 'wellbeing' (<http://www.cusp.ac.uk/about/>). And more widely, such time-critical awareness of the urgency of ecological (political and educational) solutions has led to a swathe of variously positioned anti-capitalist, or anti-competitive, agendas taking both political and academic forms (Piketty, 2014; Mason, 2015; Stiglitz, 2015). While agreeing up to a point with the macro-economic arguments, this paper takes issue with some of the assumptions underpinning these discourses and agendas as publicly defined.

What I see as *unproblematic* positions include those regarding the fundamental inequality of capitalism, the interdependence of economic, social and political freedoms and the ways these positions are being deployed against competitive 'globalisation'. These aligned positions underpin the anti-materialist argument led by CUSP's director (and economics commissioner for the UK government's Sustainable Development Commission) Tim Jackson, namely that in a world of finite resources, 'growth' is unsustainable, unnecessary and unfair and there is often an inverted relationship between economic, environmental and social growth or health – for developed countries at least (Jackson, 2009/2017). In this, Jackson draws on the anti-capitalist premise that finite resources mean growth for some is less for others (Marx, p.296; Castro, 1991) – the basic premise of sustainability understood as 'ecology', and which contrasts with the exploitative, unethical and unsustainably competitive nature of 'development'. This stance provides nascent steps towards an ecologically-tinged anti-capitalist critique of 'globalisation', and resonates with arguments about how 'globalisation' has multiplied hegemonic forms of inequality both within and between states by enlisting of more and more people into a system that promotes individualism, vested interests and inevitable inequality through its focus on competition at the expense of distribution (Ozga and Lingard, 2007; Naughton, 2016).

Also *unproblematic* are the underlying premises about the interdependence of economic, social and political freedoms as the basis for global wellbeing, which resonate with Sen's exposition of Capability theory, in which wellbeing is seen as only achievable when these freedoms develop together to produce 'capabilities', or "the ability to help themselves and also influence the world" (Sen, 1999i:18), equal participation in which Sen argues is a developmental requisite.

Where this paper takes issue with these discourses and agendas (which are after all about the fundamental unsustainability of social inequality) is that they are applied only or mainly to wealthier or 'developed' countries. For instance, Jackson's call to expand public wellbeing evaluative frameworks beyond mere economic growth is directed *only* at developed countries, while he suggests that economic growth remains the priority elsewhere – a position he seeks to explain in very relative terms: "... there is a strong case for the developed nations to make room for growth in poorer countries." (Jackson, 2009:41). It is an oversight consistent with the ways that Transition's and CUSP's critical or radical potential has been compromised. Although Jackson labels his cause 'political', the quasi-governmental status of these organisations has curtailed their ability to, "convert life politics not only into public questions but also into forms of public power" (Stevenson, 2011:77).

This assumption is often used to justify investment in higher education in developing countries, on the assumption that socio-economic impact is all that matters (Oketch et al, 2014). Debate about supposed 'over-education' has a particular resonance in places with complex socio-cultural reasons for graduate under-employment (Findlow and Hayes, 2016), and there is minimal individual or collective gain in educating large numbers of people who will not get the chance to fully use their education in an employment capacity (Sen, 1999i; Nussbaum, 2000). However, there are equally valid reasons to question this default recourse to a higher-education-for-economic-growth model at the expense of other less easy to measure forms of development. For one, it would be hard to deny that people in developing countries are also entitled to what Jackson calls, "a happiness-based measure of utility" (Jackson, 2009:32).

This geopolitical blind-spot is further challenged by the re-focus in allied strands of alternative-development discourse on the local, most specifically on "localization (...as) a radical alternative to neoliberal globalization" (Stevenson, 2011:68), in ways which also invoke sub-political, feminist and other bodies of theory engaged with socio-political power imbalances. For instance, an emerging body of work centres on what has been called 'glocalization': the context-specific interplay of supranational and local forces shaping local forms of policy, practice and experience. While some have argued that "contamination" by the 'global' removes the 'local' (Ritzer, 2003), the more productive reading of glocalization theory is that influenced by Giddens' 'structuration'. That is, as dialectical ideas focusing on ways that the local not only remains but is dynamically refined by contact with the global, which provides opportunities for local reaction and regeneration through the strategic, agential appropriation and re-purposing of existing models, concepts and networks (Robertson, 1995). Glocalization has also been applied to analysis of the possibilities for halting nation-state buy-in to global economies, and to the circumvention of local constraints and hegemonies by opening up new, less combative ways of managing conflict (Kaldor, 2003). Local regeneration also features as an ideological mainstay of sub-political discourses concerned with the right to define agendas via

“interrupt(ion) from below”, where “collective forms of understanding are mobilized in order to criticize dominant hegemonies and practices of exclusion” (Stevenson, 2011:66&73). And finally, the blended focus on contextually-specific experiences and resistance to imposed frameworks is also central to the ways that feminist ideologies resonate with sustainability’s anti-hegemonic credentials. This is a ‘feminism’ concerned not only with gender but defined by a commitment to broader equality. It is also a feminist approach that deviates slightly from the form of ‘ecofeminism’ that sees environmental sustainability as a particular preserve of ‘women’s movements’. Rather, this form of grassroots localism is grounded in a form of feminism that sees equality, anti-competitiveness and long-term thinking (the “politics of the common good” (Sandel, 2009)), as a sustainable end in itself (Lister, 1997; Salleh, 1997).

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Such a glocalized, anti-capitalist, feminist approach to education has three defining characteristics: a focus on *local* needs and correspondingly *selective* borrowing from global resources, a community-centred concept of ‘development’, and an understanding of what has been called ‘interconnectivity’ – that is, if one part isn’t working the whole is unbalanced (Jones et al, 2010). This reflects an understanding of sustainability as, “... a condition or set of conditions whereby human and natural systems can continue indefinitely in a state of mutual well-being, security and survival” (Jones et al., 2010:19).

A ‘glocalized’ approach to education would, accordingly, centre on principles of social and intergenerational responsibility, justice, dialogue, action, community and anti-ethnocentrism. It is not too far off UNESCO’s position on education’s capacity to promote equality: “Respect for the dignity and human rights of all people ..., for the human rights of future generations ..., for the greater community of life ..., for cultural diversity and a commitment to build locally and globally a culture of tolerance...” (Wals and Kieft, 2010). It would also be grounded in local needs, and challenge assumptions around isomorphism or more direct copying/borrowing of international models as good or inevitable.

An educational mandate to provide both opportunities and enabling structures for greater equality once again invokes Sen’s work, specifically his ‘capability’ definition of ‘poverty’ as a measure of not being included in the sense of not having equal agency and political freedom to act on the world in realisation of your own and others’ long-term interests (Sen, 1999i:189 & 1993). But capability theory has since been developed further to address the gap between *apparent* and *actual* opportunity. Hall pointed out influentially that it is particularly hard to make free choices in line with your own long-term interests when that imaginative ‘freedom’ is limited by longstanding subordination (Hall, 1988). Thus, Sen’s argument can be seen as naïve when we seek to define what those freedoms might *actually be* in contexts of economic and political tension where human dignity has been denied women (Nussbaum, 2000). Jackson too notes that the universally trumpeted equal right to an ‘education’ is only meaningful if that education itself is also meaningful (UNESCO, 2017), asking, “Can they *use* their school education?” (Jackson, 2009:34). But he does not address the other fundamental problem of *how* young people are to use this education.

Education put to this end, then, is intrinsically political, and intrinsically radical. That is, for economic, social and political freedoms to develop together, educational goals need to rise above mere competition, the production of capital, and even supposedly ‘ESD’ debates about using fewer resources or even the equal *sharing* of resources. The real goal for educators committed to socio-political sustainability becomes one rooted in more fundamental equality: equal provision of understanding, rights and skills to act on underlying structures of inequality. It was persuasively argued over a century ago that universal education is crucial to producing the sort of enlightened political participation that makes governments rational and accountable – what Dewey called ‘deliberative democracy’: an understanding of inequality and a sense of collective stake that can foster popular political participation to promote policies that are genuinely compatible with people’s real and long-term interests and keep in balance different sets of rights, stakes and interests (Dewey, 1916). This goal has two attendant features: first, shared interests of the governing and governed, involving free and equitable discourse and, “... the participation of every mature human being in

formation of the values that regulate the living of men together” (Dewey, 1937); second, sufficiently widespread political literacy to bestow both right and responsibility to exercise this participation, including the right to question assumptions and challenge the right of those with power to bestow and define this power. The challenge becomes: How to provide the young with what Friere calls called ‘conscientizing’ awareness of the possibilities of acting upon reality and changing it for the better (Friere, 1970:55), what he later re-labelled ‘ecological’ (Friere, 2000:66), or as Sen puts it – an education that makes them into, “... dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of both women and men.” (Sen, 1999i:189)?

Such an educational vision also, then, opens the way to *subversive* ecological discourses. It is argued that in order to challenge the idea that ‘development’ as understood by powerful actors (what Dewey called ‘authoritarian schemes’ (Dewey, 1937), or what Hall described as “...[r]uling ideas” (Hall, 1988:44)), may not be sustainable at all, it needs, “...to challenge the political economy, specify philosophic values, offer theoretical models, counter current economic rationalism or productively apply critical approaches and empowerment.” (Ellis, 2016:37).

It is a form of subversion that challenges *means*, as well as ends – as reflected in both critical pedagogy and feminist literatures, but with slightly different emphases. Critical pedagogic thought tends to focus on the processes that best enable ‘conscientizing’ awareness (Freire, 1970 & 1973), and is replicated in Sen’s thinking about the fluid spaces required to properly develop what he calls ‘capabilities’ (Sen, 1999i). A typical ‘feminist’ pedagogy, while also concerned with spaces, puts more emphasis on epistemological equality, in the sense of who gets to decide what ‘legitimate’ knowledge is, valuing “the knowledge and experience that learners themselves bring to the educational setting.” (Stromquist, 2006:149).

Fundamentally, the sources of educational tension around both of these critical pedagogic~feminist~ecological pillars (ends and means), is education’s dualistic heritage. Even though the provision of educational space and intellectual tools has been central as both foundation and outcome of activist movements, critically transformative in moments of change as the ‘practice of freedom’ (Freire, 1973) and central to the creation of new cultural and economic narratives (Apple, 1993/2000:42–43), education systems have also formed crucial components of state apparatuses for controlling marginalised groups (author, 2017).

We can see this tension today in the UK in terms of the large gap between rhetoric and implementation, where the tokenistic deployment of concepts like community wellbeing is then subsumed by the promotion of unimaginative activities conducive more to good behaviour than challenging inequality and radical action for change. Scotland among the UK’s devolved education authorities provides a partial exception to this self-contradictory model, through both the principled change in 2015 from ESD’ to ‘Efs’ and a community approach to, “...enabling learners, educators, schools and their wider communities to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society.” (Education Scotland, 2015). England’s approach reflects the more typical failure to link micro and macro policies with declarations that start out promisingly only to slide into lengthy discussion of small, manageable, responsabilising activity: “Sustainable development has a broad focus, including health, well-being and sustainable communities, as well as issues like waste management, energy use and resource management.” (OFSTED, 2012). Higher education fares little better than schools in terms of putting rhetoric into action, despite both external (critical) and internal (institutional) attempts to reinvigorate the sector’s role as a “center of critique” (Giroux, 2014:4), “... because it exists to ask what constitutes the public good,” (Nixon, 2011:1). *Consciousness* of a need to be seen to be taking a progressive ecological position is reflected in the rhetorical work of protest groups seeking to harness the intellectual capital of universities to challenge inequality and injustice (WUF, 2009), through national Higher Education Funding Council sustainability strategy papers and centres, to the deployment of ‘sustainability’ as a market-researched badge of approval for institutional brands and courses (Business in the Community, 2010; Bone and Agombar, 2011; Amaeshi, 2015). But such *apparent* buy-in obscures a lack of clarity about *actual* commitment to, or even understanding of, the indivisibility of environmental and social sustainability and their basis in real equality – and certainly none that follows through.

As for *why* this is not happening, while we can see the powerful linguistic norming that partially masks superficiality, neither this nor Ellis’ observations about lack of policy attention to socio-economic and geo-political distribution and participation provides causal explanations. For those, we need to look to

the tensions consuming education today. In the UK, for instance, at tertiary level, higher education's 'conscientizing' role as a *disruptive* process and a route to social change (Friere, 1970) is being undermined by risk-averse curbs on free speech, institutional academic capitalism, and an overall reductive commodification of learning in terms of both content and outcome. Increased risk-averse use of censorship and surveillance have changed the educational meaning of 'safe spaces'— from spaces where it is safe to explore challenging ideas leading to grassroots action, to the opposite — spaces supposedly 'safe' from those ideas (author, 2017). This re-conceptualisation has combined with the avoidance of institutional financial risk and the consolidation of students' 'consumer rights' (CMA, 2016), to shift the meaning of 'stakeholding' in this context away from its ecological sense as the "politics of shared and not personal responsibility" (Scerri, 2009:480), to a matter of the right to demand specific products, in a contractual or business model (author, 2018).

Moreover, in settings notable for widespread and acute marginalisation, challenging these reductive, competitive 'development' agendas through education is made even more difficult by underlying structures of inequality. In such contexts, 'means' is a matter of 'support'. That is, "[e]ducation, to be transformative, must not only provide knowledge about the conditions of one's subordination but also give the emotional support and political skills to visualise and implement social change" (Stromquist, 2006:149). On one hand, it is argued that resources are inadequate unless they are accompanied by policy-makers' understanding of the structural or ideational impediments that bear down on the lives of the marginalised (Unterhalter, 2007; Stromquist, 2004). As Unterhalter's work has shown us (Unterhalter, 2007), and Nussbaum's (Nussbaum, 2013), and before that Sen's (1999ii), resources can be wasted if lack of political understanding prevents supposed opportunity from being converted into the 'capability' to bring about change.

Yet identifying and providing this support without *categorising* those in need of it not only risks perpetuating unjust structures of authority, but also invokes unresolved feminist debate about whether or not equality is best achieved by protecting gender and other forms of diversity (Enslin, 2003), or by minimising these differences since the categories we use to talk about diversity have after all been "constructed in subordination" (Mouffe, 1992:377). The difficulty in navigating the twin but often difficult-to-reconcile feminist principles of equal access and equal value (to diverse perspectives) is evident in Stromquist's work. While she endorses Nussbaum's emphasis on women's mobilisation around their "self-identification as members of a specific group of disadvantaged persons" (Stromquist, 2004:40), she also points out the danger that gender-specific structures needed to enable equal access actually reinforce segregation (Stromquist, 2004:47). Whether strategic separateness is a continuation of oppression or freedom depends on the relative prioritisation of different (perhaps competing) freedoms. But it also draws attention to the underlying social inequalities that make segregation necessary, and to Dietz's point about the tendency for rights to be enshrined on behalf of the marginalised.

Ensuring that marginalised people have adequate practical and imaginative resources to make decisions about what change is needed, and what part they wish to take, un-impeded by their marginalisation, is a substantial challenge. South Asian fieldwork has identified and explored the contextual differences between distinct levels of feminist empowerment, where 'immediate' levels of empowerment (access to 'rights' that have been permitted), are contrasted with 'intermediate' levels (seeing institutional rules and resources), and 'deeper' ones that rest on an appreciation of underlying power structures and possibilities for their disruption (Kabeer 1999). However, as I noted above (Stromquist, 2000), these endemic and multi-level structures of inequality make it hard for marginalised people to think productively 'outside the box' in these ways when the box has so long been defined for them. Unterhalter reminds us of the ways that formal education emphatically reinforces subordinate status as just another hierarchy, where "subordinated groups ... learn their place of unfreedom" (Unterhalter, 2003:9), and she emphasizes the difficult balance (nodded to in Sen's and Nussbaum's work (Sen, 1999ii; Nussbaum, 2000), between centring individuals' own values and goals as an evaluative framework and realising that these values and sense of what is possible have themselves been conditioned by subordination (Unterhalter et al, 2007).

The developing country contexts behind Sen's, Nussbaum's, Stromquist's and Unterhalter's insights focus attention towards fundamental structural questions about the education-critical transformation-social change relationship. That is, getting more young people into school and even reforming pedagogy can't do everything. Stromquist and Unterhalter have both highlighted the pivotal role of underlying structural relationships that may cause aspirations to be adapted to constraint in

developing countries (Unterhalter, 2003 & 2007; Stromquist, 2004 & 2006). As an important but under-acknowledged example, Stromquist reminds us of the limitations of the classic human rights activist model, "... based on a juridical model of individual complaints against state agents for their denial of civic liberties", in contexts when violators are not only state agents but endemic to how society is structured (Stromquist, 2004:40). Therefore, Stromquist argues, educationally-mediated enlightened political participation can only result in widespread emancipation if it is also accompanied by the possibility of structural change (Stromquist, 2015), a possibility that may itself be limited by lack of democratic systems. Yet notwithstanding the validity of this argument about structural constraint, there may be grounds to look afresh at the structure–agency relationship here (un-resolved in Dewey’s thinking), to question the extent to which fundamental structural equality is a *pre-condition* or *consequence* of empowering education. On one level, as Friere noted, contexts of profound structural inequality heighten both need and incentive for activism, insofar as they require the oppressed to, "... *fight* for their emancipation." (Friere, 1970:67). But so long as the ‘how?’ question remains un-addressed, marginalised groups are not able to develop knowledge of deeper inequalities or of how to redress these.

Material and structural constraints alone, as well as the particular geo-political lens adopted in this paper, invite us to look for local examples of empowerment and transformation-focused education to see how they are addressed, and possibly overcome. And indeed there *are* places where backdrops of intense socio-political change reveal different aspects of education’s potential to influence the complex relationships between constraint and empowerment; where tensions between traditional inequalities and speedy development drawing on global and free market resources have led to secondary tensions between socio-cultural, political and structural constraint and change; where education has mediated the balancing of access, participation, equality and specific freedoms to promote the desired forms of development; and in which unique forms of government–grassroots cooperation can be seen as new glocalised forms of educationally-mediated development.

So it is to such examples that we now turn, in South Africa, Latin America and the Arab Middle East, in order to explore the situationally specific ways in which holistic, political, equality-focused views of development underpin educational work, and to evaluate the differences that this educational work has made to socio-political equality. I do this through a ‘glocalization’ lens that gives analytical space to both the local (geopolitical) and equality (ideological) dimensions of respective educational projects. And to excavate and render accessible shifts and processes of strategic appropriation and re-purposing (Robertson, 1995), I analyse these in terms of their vertical and horizontal axes. That is, I look at differential power relations and sharing structures and mechanisms using some of the structural components of Drori et al’s analytical glocalization toolkit (Drori et al, 2014), here focusing on both constraints against converting rhetoric to first action and then change, and what forms of collaboration have succeeded in overcoming those constraints.

SOUTH AFRICA:

TRIUMPH OF HEGEMONIC CONSTRAINT OVER WILL FOR CHANGE

The account of a post-apartheid attempt at socio-political reform in South Africa provides our first insight into this problem of ends and means in the transformation of society towards sustainability, by providing insight into what happens when there is insufficient educational integration in such processes. South Africa’s broader contribution to this discussion derives from the complex relationships between government and grassroots in overturning longstanding demographic inequalities, and the ways in which education has been central not only to progress but also in the ways that its inadequacies, intrinsic to those same inequalities, have constrained progress. Battles for gender equality in terms of equal presence and voice in both private and public spaces have included government attempts to involve previously excluded rural women in discursive struggles around legislation and policy reform. Yet this has been difficult, for reasons that point directly to education’s role, ideal and actual, as a medium for political engagement. Possibilities for the educationally-mediated construction of post-racial identities among a diversifying student body have been noted here (Walker, 2005). However, other explorations of the ways that South African education has *sought* to address the learned subordination of black people, women, and black

women especially have found educationally-mediated possibilities *limited* by that the ways underlying inequalities were replicated in the education system (Unterhalter, 2003).

The specific attempt we are looking at was aimed through legal reform at what Kabeer called 'deeper' levels of structural empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). The 1990s attempt to improve women's rights through the 'National Machinery for Women' (NMW) illustrates this difficulty. The NMW was an Act sought to improve women's rights in South Africa by involving women previously excluded from policy decisions, that is subordinated both socially and legally, as active agents in the construction of empowering new legislation. It sought to do this through giving these women political platform in drafting the post-Apartheid National Constitution at a time when the equality of women had become integral to rights discourses in South Africa. Customary laws concerning marriage, divorce and consent were unequal; married women even had minority status. At the same time, the 1992 establishment of the Women's National Coalition had drawn on a fairly established local tradition of women's activism (Hassim, 2004), which created grassroots readiness for change. The NMW thus set up a Committee for Traditional Learning as a structure for democratic participation in re-drafting this unequal legislative framework and to attempt to make the government accountable. But these women's inability to be as involved as the state had intended meant that the initiative failed. Few responses were received to discussion paper and workshops, and briefings were poorly attended. In the end, the existing unequal customary law was incorporated into state law without the active participation of many of the women (Gouws, 2004). The failure of this project according to its intended terms of reference has been attributed to a lack of skills, confidence, understanding and social structures that would have made it possible for them to participate meaningfully (Gouws, 2004). The project was also urban-centred, proving an additional challenge for women restricted by means to the countryside where they lived. So even though the state went out of its way to make structured space for women, the attempt was undermined by these women's lack of access to this space and this conversation.

In this case, although an holistic view of development was positioned at the level of underlying socio-legal rights, the attempt foundered on the evident difficulty of disrupting hegemonic practices and norms (in this case both racial and patriarchal) without the requisite levels of skill, support and fluid spaces. It might also be noted that these women lacked the sort of education that could have helped them to understand existing structures, their own long-term interests and the skills to navigate those structures – a classic example of the sorts of resource wastage that Sen, Nussbaum, Unterhalter and Stromquist were writing about.

Put in structural terms, despite the presence of conditions for socio-political change (including a specific goal, political will, acknowledgement of the need for change to out-of-touch and unjust legislative and cultural norms, and a grassroots readiness to be involved in that change) (Stromquist, 2004, 2006, 2015), educational and public structures were not adequately integrated to enable the targeted marginalised group to genuinely participate in shaping power and discourses. Though this case comes from a quarter of a century ago, such difficulties have continued to be reported in relation to implementing educationally-mediated emancipatory change in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, work focusing especially on gendered inequality has revealed ways in which fundamental socio-economic conditions continue to impede what critical pedagogies can do to change those conditions (Westbrook et al, 2013).

Judged against our working concept of the sustainability-oriented education seen as one that empowers the marginalised to take action for equality, the NMW project can be seen as a commendable attempt to promote inclusion understood as political voice. However, lacking grounding in broader awareness of poverty as being excluded both from the body politic (SeSen, 1999i:189 & 1993), and from means through which to take suddenly available 'right' (in the form of both present structures and pre-existing educationally-mediated skills), it falls short from a capability perspective.

LATIN AMERICA:

CONTEXTUALLY APPROPRIATE VERTICAL SETTING OF MEANS AND ENDS

A contrasting story in terms of government–grassroots involvement and corresponding levels of impact is provided by a group of emancipatory educational innovations in late 20th Century Latin America. Here, following the 1950s and 1960s transition towards democracy in Brazil, Peru and the Dominican Republic, traditions of grassroots education and political activism were drawn on in a series of movements aimed at overcoming the hegemonic limitations of both political systems and formal education, drawing on critical and participative pedagogies to achieve greater and more effective political participation among marginalised groups. The most well-known of these is the Popular Administration project in Porto Alegre, Brazil, which included the well-documented Citizen School project whose overarching democratisation agenda was led by the Workers Party and drew on some of the critical pedagogic ideas such as ‘problem-posing education’ expounded by Paulo Friere, blending critical pedagogic ends and means through both content and method (Frere, 1970). The documented outcomes include increased effective participation, with participants able to both interrupt reductive forms of education in order to use it to share real economic and political power (Gandin and Apple, 2003; Gandin, 2007). The project worked in these terms partly because it was grounded in local concerns and needs, and also because it was accompanied by the Popular Administration’s flagship ‘participatory budgeting’ approach to enabling the poorest citizens to resist official economic policy-making.

The cultural currency of critical pedagogy can also be seen in the non-formal education projects in Peru (Manuela Ramos, <http://www.manuela.org.pe/>; and Flora Tristan, <https://www.crs.org/stories/flora-tristan-relationship>) and the Dominican Republic (CIPAF), that combined participatory, critical pedagogies with an adult literacy focus and feminist action to build action plans aimed at promoting awareness of inequality and action for change. Linked to education’s role in the Women’s Movement in this region, these movements shared with the South African case a commitment to changing the lives of the poor and marginalised through more equitable legislation on ‘women’s issues’ such as abortion and property rights, domestic violence and rape, but they approached this at the more fundamental level and through embedded processes, seeking for instance to increase women’s political representation via electoral quotas and also make new structural alliances to work on the action plans. Documented results included: an increased awareness of the needs and abilities of women “as a social category”; the re-training of police on feminist principles; new legislation on family violence, child support, property rights; electoral quotas; and the incorporation of feminist ideas into education plans (Stromquist, 2004).

The different outcomes of the Latin American and South African stories of education’s enlistment in addressing endemic inequalities and lack of democracy point to two important factors, which can be seen as either pre-requisites or negotiated *parts of* this process: the importance of *who* sets the agenda, and the importance of really thinking through *how* to involve formerly marginalised people in this agenda-setting process. In terms of *who* got to make the decisions about ends and means, the Citizen Schools succeeded at least in part because their goal of bringing about greater economic equality was operationalised in the tangible and immediate forms that were meaningful to the grassroots membership of the reform committees. In each of the Latin American cases – the Citizen School, Manuela Ramos, Flora Tristan and CIPAF – educational space was made for the formerly marginalised to set agendas. Gandin has attributed the success of the Citizen School project partly to the strength of organized educational movements in Brazil, and the routine “active resistance” this provides to hegemony, which is therefore bound to shape its policies in dialogue (Gandin, 2007:181). In the Dominican and Peruvian cases, meanwhile, the possibility of legal change depended on the deliberations and work of women who were being educated in line with regional traditions of non-formal education, where flexible modes of delivery accommodated women’s commitments and structural barriers to access. These success factors are in stark contrast to the South African project, where the agenda was set and decisions made and enacted entirely by government actors.

In feminist terms, however, there are problems. The Peruvian and Dominican successes can also be attributed to the ways they sought to *balance* the feminist aversion to things being ‘done for’ oppressed people (Dietz, 1985), with care not to limit goals to the partial aspirations that are said to feature among the formerly marginalised (Sen, 1999ii; Nussbaum, 2000; Unterhalter, 2003). These were context-specific forms of negotiated alliance enabled women to focus on working around the system to achieve new legislation (Stromquist, 2004). On the other hand, “The link between the women-led NGOs in the study and economically marginalised women shows a path that has shifted from seeking to work in coordination with men ... to women working by themselves.” (Stromquist,

2004:47). This context-specific strategy is problematic from a more absolutist feminist perspective that would see such isolation as a continuation of disempowerment, and actually strengthening the social structure that makes isolation or segregation preferable.

Ideologically substantial though this reservation is, we can also see the compromise as an example of both 'glocalized' and capability-oriented re-shaping of supposedly *local* pedagogic 'traditions'. That is, we can see how pedagogic 'traditions' flow from broader cultures and structures and *also* respond to the global or supranational forces, but via strategic, pragmatic, selective appropriation (Robertson, 1995). However, on another horizontal note, while the grassroots-state relationships underpinning the Latin American movements can indeed be seen as, "an attempt to introduce change from outside the centres of established power" (Stromquist, 2004:36), their success also depended on building alliances. For instance, while the Manuela Ramos organisation was started in 1978 by a group of seven Peruvian women it later affiliated with Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA) and so to a broader equality mandate (<http://whomakesthenews.org/articles/case-study-movimiento-manuela-ramos>), before it folded in 2009 following difficult negotiations with state and church over the precise limits of that equality.

THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST: FROM GRADUALISM TO POWER-SHARING

A range of educational innovations in the Arab world, another rapidly developing and fractured region with multiple cross-cutting political tensions and corresponding traditions of segregated and unequal provision, shed more light on these issues. What this region provides specifically is innovative, strategic deployment of state-grassroots-transnational relationships in setting transformative educational agendas, including separate education for the formerly marginalised, justified as the most expedient, context appropriate way towards the *goal* of eradicating inequality in the form of exclusion.

In Egypt, an influential part of the Arab world and home to an established tradition of feminism, prominent activists like Nawal al-Sa'dawi have repeatedly pointed to education, and changing people's *minds*, as a more effective route than legislation to eradicating unequal patriarchal cultural artefacts such as FGM (Sa'adawi, 2015:17). Here in 2000 the UNESCO-sponsored Egyptian Girls' Education Initiative, a network of 92 'girl-friendly' schools was established with the aim of facilitating access to schooling for girls from poor and rural backgrounds as a means of creating, "a new generation of schools for a new generation of women – women who are educated, empowered, and eager to take their rightful place in society, as equal partners" – explained in both economic and political terms. The aim was addressed in two ways: facilitating access by first identifying the main impediments then through informally structured study programmes to take account of these, and through non-competitive, collaborative pedagogies that built on the ways the girls were comfortable working (Sultana, 2007). Resonating with some of the documented outcomes from the Porto Alegre project, identifiable results included not only (narrowly) 'educational' accomplishments but also transformational cultural shifts, with the girls and their parents leading whole-village protests against FGM for instance (Sultana, 2007). In terms of local, national or global input, UNESCO involvement was balanced with local influence, in particular in addressing why families might choose not to send their girls to school; taking the school to *them* instead was modelled on practice in local Egyptian 'community schools'. Yet the top-down and powerfully-led agenda meant that there was less impact in terms of national, regional or global political engagement.

In the Arab Gulf states, a traditional aversion to challenging power and authority is undercut by some novel, glocalized, approaches to government-grassroots collaboration, notably in the form of an ongoing raft of educational initiatives spurred by market-led internationalism but also aimed in large part at redressing internal structural inequalities, prime among them some gendered ones (author, 2016). The mass higher education of women in these states has been achieved most visibly by state-sponsored free-market expansion of provision, and by widespread sponsorship, especially of women to study overseas, and especially in Saudi and the UAE (author, 2016). Among the results of this project is a social transformation, with women obtaining the right to vote and seek election to parliament across the region and in Saudi Arabia also the formerly denied rights to drive and attend mixed-sex sporting events. However, questions remain about awareness of deeper structures of power and inequality and the democratic right to (re)shape society, those 'deeper' levels of

empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). Certainly, there are feminist movements across these states, some with a wider equality remit than merely gender, and there is widespread awareness of underlying structures of power (author, 2012). But despite the shift of geopolitical policy framework from regional to global (author 2016), gender segregation runs deep, with is a tendency towards 'separate but equal' forms of equality in the public sector.

In most of these states, education's role in redressing structural and cultural inequality has taken forms both familiar to mainstream feminist movements and some seemingly oppositely positioned ones. Especially notable is the unique *blend* of these two forces. For example, the guarantee of separate gendered spaces was one of the tools governments used at the start of state higher education in the 1970s to remove cultural barriers against women attending, and universities have continued to entertain policies with a place for 'women's' subjects, campuses and travel and guardianship arrangements (Bahrain a notable exception). A 'taking the education to them' approach, familiar from the Egyptian and Latin American cases discussed here, was also adopted in the early days of UAE higher education, although those barriers were subsequently removed (author, 2012).

Furthermore, in relation to this separate-but-equal approach there is a good deal of ambivalence among the formerly marginalised themselves. On one hand, work done in the UAE has found well-educated women defending gender-segregated spaces (author, 2012), while in Bahrain moves to *introduce* educational segregation provoked protests (author, 2016;115). At the same time, even those women who defend some exclusion resist both *forced* segregation and the government telling them they couldn't take certain subjects (author, 2012). 'Feminism' more broadly has had little discursive currency, compromised by a cultural reluctance to bring the private into the public and reservations about cultural imperialism and essentialist subjugation (Al-Ali, 2000:47). Yet the breaking down of barriers to political representation has been accompanied by other inroads into longstanding marginalisation. For instance, in the UAE a novel approach to women shaping the state's relationship with the law, religion and gender can be seen in the form of a government scheme to train well-educated young Emirati women as *muftiyas* (Islamic scholars) to advise women via a telephone hotline (Ghafour, 2016). A small scheme it may be, and a small concession to equality in terms of its maintaining gendered aspects to the social system, it has nonetheless produced well-educated young women involved at state level in influencing how citizens think about their relationship with the world.

So what light does the apparent ambivalence underlying these unique, blended approaches to social transformation shed on our three main questions: *how* to be socially and politically inclusive in such cultural contexts; *who* gets to decide and set the agenda; and the complex ethics of providing special forms of 'support' for women? On a policy level, deciding whether the continuation of segregated spaces represents freedom or a continuation of oppression requires us to acknowledge that there are, clearly, different and possibly competing freedoms to weigh. Special arrangements can be seen as compensation for former exclusion, but also as an easy way to avoid changing the real problem: the social structure (Stromquist, 2004, 2006, 2015). As for these women, one aspect of the multi-layered ambivalence is that between a deep understanding of specific forms of capital imbalance and an apparent reluctance to lay the blame at underlying hegemonic power structures or take direct action (author, 2012). And this has partly been explained by Gulf women's desire to speak for themselves, valuing the *availability* of separate spaces even though they can see it is only necessitated underlying social and political structures. That is, in endorsing some aspects of womanhood as a "discrete category" (Mouffe, 1992:377), they reject "the *many* (my italics) ways in which that very category is "constructed in subordination" (Mouffe, 1992:377), by power wherever it is, either local or international. But it is equally possible to read this apparent ambivalence as coming from a position of disempowerment, in Stromquist's and Unterhalter's terms, limited to only partial understandings of what is possible.

Notwithstanding, or even because of, these contextual anomalies, this educationally mediated change process may actually be a uniquely glocalised grassroots~state~transnational model of critical social development, signifying that 'gradualism' is giving way to a more direct approach to engaging women's voices in the shaping of social and political consciousness, and giving due attention to how the formerly marginalised '*use their education*' (Jackson, 2009). These and many other examples of university-fed re-shaping of social norms also suggest a shift in the balance of power, and in this light the Gulf governments' decisions to be in control of the process may be even more significant.

CONCLUSIONS

These examples of intense socio-political change in contexts of longstanding structural inequality reveal a dynamic policy–grassroots socio-political stratum, educationally-mediated and with roots in various causes and agendas, that has the potential to help steer sustainable social change taking due account of the experiences of those hitherto excluded from dominant narratives.

Across a geographical and historical range of sites, we have seen enacted forms of education for democratically sustainable development, prioritizing in various ways: equality, the common good, social *and* political freedoms (including the ability to take part in decisions and take action for change), and local forms of knowledge that deploy global resources. These have been achieved through changing vision of education as critical, political and radical, and balancing individual and collective needs.

In terms of context-specificity, we have discussed: distinct forms of constraint including structural and cultural inequality; distinct and distinctive goals for educationally-mediated change; unique approaches to balancing of specific freedoms and equalities; distinct models of grassroots activism; and variant forms of supranational, state and grassroots collaboration. We have discussed context-specific, glocalized matches between ends and available means. And we have noted the establishment of differently flexible structures to accommodate both cultural and structural barriers to girls' and women's access to education; and how in the Latin American and Arab Gulf examples these have been used to challenge the powerful delineation of structures and cultures – promoting first knowledge (of structural inequality and their own long-term interest), then voice, followed by the establishment of new venues in which to exercise this.

In terms of progress, we have seen – in both Latin America and the Arab world – education used in distinctive, context-appropriate ways to emancipate the marginalised and, "... re-define their position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure" (Castells, 1997:8). Elsewhere, as we have seen in the early post-Apartheid South African example, local traditions of entrenched inequalities appear to have permeated links between social, political and education systems to limit possibilities.

Insight into vertical processes is afforded by the context-specific and glocalized forms of navigation around tensions between both rival agendas and power systems. There is evidence across these examples of awareness – at various levels – that structural equality includes equal rights to (re)shape society, to change the nature and locus of power, and of education as a resource to achieve this. Still-fragile links between awareness and radical action for change are being addressed in novel ways, and it is not always by means of challenging hegemonic structures directly. In fact, new forms of state–grassroots collaboration can be seen as ways for state actors to head-off direct challenge that would threaten their control. Overall, these efforts read as context-specific forms of negotiated alliance over both ends and means (including pragmatic local solutions to barriers around different groups of people working together or separately). While some of the solutions are problematic from an absolutist perspective (for instance, taking education and political rights to the marginalised detracts from other aspects of 'equality', arguably legitimising and reinforcing segregation), these three cases again provide instructive insights into the necessary balance between ends and means. Whereas the Latin American and Arab Gulf examples showcase productive new relationships between state-driven and cultural change, of grassroots activism working within rather than against the system, the South African example reveals (through its absence) not only the critical role of adequate educational traditions but also what happens when attempts at reform are top-down and not grounded in lived, gendered, realities.

As for the horizontal aspects of educationally-mediated democratic change, far from "contamination by the global" *removing* 'the local' (Ritzer, 2003), the 'local' in these developing countries is being operationalised to framing agendas in an environment subject to global flows and used to re-shape society. For instance, again in the Latin American and Gulf examples, we see education giving marginalised groups the tools to resist categorisation in the form of *other people's* ideas of 'equality' as well as imported models of both capitalism and educationally mediated activism and state-led

change. In other words, one of the ways that educationally-mediated subversive potential is being realised is by global~local interaction and reflexivity inspiring resistance to imposed ends and largely binary ideas about what is possible. ... drawing on local, national and supranational tools to equip young people to think and act outside pre-set ranges of ideas, to help shape new realities, and to ask, what the point of education is, what the public good is, and how education can serve that.

Overall, this article has shown variants of educationally-mediated socio-political change in whose horizontal and vertical complexities (and variability but also analysability) lie useful wider lessons. In the cases we have examined, the selective drawing on global concepts, networks and capital that does not exactly bypass the control of national governments but nonetheless leads to emancipatory action for sustainable local change can be seen as a new form of ecofeminism: one grounded in the diversity of lived realities, where proliferating forms of struggle are matched by proliferating ways of *engaging with* those struggles. In other words, focussing on developing countries in relation to an agenda that is not yet a mainstay of *actual* education policy in 'developed' countries such as the UK has involved a critical re-examination of assumptions, particularly around possibilities for converting ecological educational discourses into 'conscientizing', empowering education that does help to make society more equal.

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