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Freire and planning education : the pedagogy of hope for faculty and students

by

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Abstract

This paper focuses on UK higher education, but the circumstances it describes have parallels throughout the Global North. Its purpose is to offer hope to faculty and students despondent about the possibility of changing a higher education system inimical to much-valued aspects of professional (including planning) education. The paper argues that a Freirian-inflected understanding of reflection can create conditions in which students and faculty have the possibility of developing a shared, and radical, understanding of the shortcomings of current higher education and identify real, if sometimes modest opportunities for change in the short-term.

Keywords

frame reflection; pedagogy of hope; professional education; planning curriculum;
professional skills

Introduction

There is widespread agreement among commentators on and participants in higher education (HE) in the global North that universities are well into a period of significant, multi-dimensional change that poses 'challenges' – to use a non-prejudicial term - to core activities such as learning and teaching . The trends have distinctive implications for planning education, and professional education more generally, making it the more important that those engaged in planning education are able to stand back and assess the nature of the changes and what alternatives may be possible (Thomas, 2017).

This paper contributes to debates in critical planning education by sharing reflections rooted in the British HE system but more widely applicable to the landscape of education beyond the UK. It stems from an acceptance of the difficulty of teaching in the present environment of HE , and the danger of despair at the prospect of trying to influence forces such as 'globalisation' or 'neo-liberalism' that are sometimes referred to in discussions of HE in the UK and elsewhere (see Burawoy, 2011, Lerner and Le Heron, 2003; Rustin, 2016; Whiteley et al, 2008). It is, however, hopeful in its approach, presenting a novel reading of Paulo Freire's ideas in the context of planning education and a review of the potential of reflective practice to provide teachers and learners alike with tools to develop and nurture their own agency. The paper thus aims to contribute to an often polarised debate in HE with a suggestion about how progressive educational practice can be possible in a seemingly inauspicious context.

The paper explores some implications of putting reflection at the heart of planning, and hence the education of planners. It shows how a Freirian-inflected approach to planning education resonates with strands in discussions of reflective professional practice within

and outside the planning profession, in particular Schön's (1983) notion of frame reflection. The significance of Freire has been recognised by some commentators on planning education, but they tend to draw very selectively, and in passing, on his works (eg Sturzaker, 2014). This paper has a more wide-ranging engagement with Freire.

Encouraging planning students to be reflective – as learners and would-be professionals – requires that educators acknowledge, and think critically about, their own part in the learning process. This relational approach cannot be bounded in the way that contemporary approaches to higher education curricula require. Inevitably, then, a serious commitment to reflective professional education brings students and teachers together to jointly analyse the nature and purpose (including, but not restricted to, the political economy) of contemporary education. We argue that in so doing it breaks the isolation of educators, reminds them that their struggle for meaningful work is part of a wider unending political struggle, and in itself is an emancipatory act. The paper is the outcome of a systematic reflection, based on – and going beyond – relevant literature on where to find hope for and within HE teaching; it does not report empirical findings from a research project but prepares the way for a research agenda in a very lightly treaded area of professional pedagogy.

Four parts follow this introduction: the second section below delineates the context of planning education, with a specific focus on British HE; the third suggests how Freire's message can be still useful and relevant in the current context for HE in the global North; the fourth section illustrates the relevance of reflection and reflective practice in planning education and outlines ways to embed *frame reflection* in planning curricula; whilst the final part draws conclusions on linking a pedagogy of hope with frame reflection in progressive

education for professionals - which could be of value beyond the British context, within which the authors have developed their argument – and proposes an agenda for further research.

The HE context of planning education

There is a considerable literature on the changing nature of higher education, exhibiting a diversity of perspectives even among fierce critics of current trends (see, for example, Collini, 2012; Holmwood, 2011 ; MacIntyre, 2001) . In this section we draw on, but do not exhaustively reprise others' findings, and debates. We also make an effort in summarising where our ideas come from (the geographical area, but also the economic, social and institutional frame) as a way of introducing our argument; we describe briefly the UK HE landscape, within which the authors are active as educators, as localising our thoughts might support readers in making sense of, and engaging with, the positions presented in this paper – which we believe might be of relevance beyond the UK - in their own respective surroundings. The section does two things: first, it argues that some changes to the organisation and management of higher education serve to undermine belief among university educators in the possibility of their shaping their work according to their beliefs, if these are at odds with the university's ethos ; second, it suggests that changes in the focus of HE are inimical to a particular, widely respected, conception of professional planning education. The section concludes that in consequence educators engaged in planning education may all too easily fall into the dismay and withdrawal that befell Nietzsche's (1910, 34 - 44) young teacher when faced by the apparent impossibility of reforming

education. The paper goes on to offer (non-Nietzschean) hope about the possibility of change.

The largest presence in the UK's HE sector are the over 130 institutions which term themselves universities and have significant public funding (though with an increasing proportion of their income generated by student fees and external sources such as research and consultancy contracts and exploitation of intellectual property) (Tight, 2011; Universities UK, 2018). There are also a handful of small private universities and non-university degree-providers. Conservative governments have encouraged the formation of private institutions, but as yet their presence remains marginal in the sector as a whole. The current institutional landscape is the outcome of waves of new foundations prompted by substantial social and economic change (such as the growth of a substantial urban middle class in the early and mid-nineteenth century leading to the establishment of so-called 'redbrick universities' in the major cities), and during the last fifty years or so spearheaded by government action (as in the establishment of many 'plate-glass' universities in the 1960s). The *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* allowed polytechnics, institutions ostensibly primarily dedicated to technical teaching in higher and further education to term themselves universities. The HE sector itself recognises that universities fall into broad groupings based on 'mission'/aspiration and current activities, and these groupings still broadly relate to date of origins and original purpose of the institution. The most important axes of differentiation are research and teaching. All universities do at least some research and some teaching, and most rely substantially – if to varying degrees – on income from student fees. Some universities style themselves 'research-intensive', others suggest that they seek a balance of high-quality research and teaching, and a (somewhat larger group) undertake research or consultancy but emphasise their expertise in teaching (and, typically,

rely especially heavily on student fees as a proportion of their income). Schön's (1983) observation that the academic status gradient had research-intensive at the top and then fell towards applied research and teaching still broadly holds in the UK today. Yet all have been affected by steadily reducing public funding, and government policy to create a kind of quasi-market in higher education, within which students are conceived as consumers of a (private) educational good.

A tougher financial environment has meant that UK universities – like many elsewhere - have never been more tightly managed. This is a phenomenon that was signalled some decades ago (Halsey, 1995), but has accelerated in the last twenty years. As they compete hard for students, research income and public monies, those running universities feel a need to focus their institutions, and increasingly define themselves as corporate entities with aims and purposes to which their constituent parts (such as academic and professional schools) must contribute rather than as collections of schools which have objectives and priorities formed at least in part, and possibly largely, by membership of disciplinary and professional networks (Deem et al, 2007; Thomas, 2017). The familiar corporate apparatus and ethos of performance indicators, performance appraisal, league tables, personal development and training, and the promotion of innovation and change is ubiquitous in contemporary universities, and – overwhelming anecdotal and research evidence suggests - has become increasingly effective in shaping behaviour (Smyth, 2017) . Increasingly, in the UK anything significant activity that an academic wants to do will need to be justified in relation to agreed personal goals, which should themselves be congruent with School goals, which will in turn contribute to achieving well-publicised university goals. All of these will need to be formulated in terms which are measurable as part of an 'audit culture' (Strathern, 2000).

The tendency of these change is to (re)construct the academic's role as a collection of discrete, measurable activities. Other activities and attitudes are squeezed out. Ginn (2014) discusses some of the pedagogical implications of these changes in relation to the supervision of a thesis by graduate students on taught programmes. He points out that the management systems in place offer no incentives to supervisors to encourage students to see the research task as an open-ended (and hence risky) exploration of how to understand the world. 'Care' for the student tends to be interpreted as making sure a manageable topic is chosen, researched and written about within a set timetable. No teacher will dispute that completion of a thesis is essential, but also important is the potential for excitement, surprise and personal development that quality research can involve, and, Ginn argues, this is being squeezed out of the process. In relation to research ethics, Ginn's research showed that it became interpreted as a part of project management – a manageable, discrete form-filling and box-ticking exercise – rather than an occasion for students to continuously reflect on their involvement, through the research process, in a complex web of simultaneous relationships to research 'subjects', to emerging knowledge, to disciplinary and professional advancement.

The degree to which university students are constructed only as consumers can be exaggerated (Ginn, 2014; Brooks et al, 2016), but the language and practice of learning and teaching in most universities makes it clear that teaching is viewed as a process of delivering a service to a client/customer who is 'shopping around' in an academic emporium and whose satisfaction (as opposed to education) must be central to the university's concerns (Rochford, 2008; Dickerson et al, 2016). This seems at odds, for the critical participant-observer, with the increased pressure and influence by governments and teaching professional bodies and charities (see, for example, the agendas of the Higher Education

Academy first and now Advance HE in the UK, and the National Academies for Sciences, Engineering and Medicine in the US) to operationalise findings of educational and pedagogical research for HE in order to systematically engage with more meaningful teaching methods for deep learning (e.g. Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, 2000). The lived reality for many academics is a constant feeling of tension between what is desirable and what is practically do-able and a sense that somehow things are not as they should be. As McArthur (2013, 152) put it in relation to UK higher education, ‘ many who work and study ... do so with a nagging sense of unease; a sense that something is not right about what we are doing’.

The service-delivery model of education has important organisational and pedagogical consequences. First, the service being offered must be carefully described, and then delivered as described. To an extent this is not an unreasonable expectation on the part of students under any model of education, but if it assumes too much importance it can inhibit any teaching that involves uncertainty about outcomes. Project work, service teaching, group work – all staples of planning education and in principle very much favoured in the contemporary classroom (Grant, 2012) – can involve high levels of uncertainty about how they may turn out, if honestly and ethically conducted ; they are therefore – in their essence - not prudent teaching vehicles in the contemporary university for those educators (and schools) which need to be particularly sensitive to student opinion, unless appropriately watered-down, nominal versions of these methods are developed ad-hoc. As Rios (2011, 40) has put it in relation to service learning in the USA, ‘Meaningful and transformative engagement is always messy, often unpredictable, and dependent on sustained human relationships’. Others have argued that this is always a struggle to achieve in contemporary higher education (Angotti, Doble and Horrigan, 2011; Fischler, 2012).

With an etiolated experience of practical knowledge and practical judgement, educational content comes to be equated with propositional knowledge (Rochford, 2008). This option may seem particularly attractive when student evaluations of modules, programmes and teachers play a part in the public comparisons between universities, and in performance appraisals of academic staff. If a module takes risks that don't work out, student evaluation may be poor. There is little incentive, therefore, for educators or planners to take risks. This is not to say that project work and the like doesn't happen; simply that those who wish to genuinely promote it are increasingly likely to feel they are out of step with an institution's ethos and direction, and indeed with what is likely to help their individual careers. When it happens there are short-term instrumental advantages to set project work within insufficiently problematised settings and take the semblance of disneyfied versions of complex methods, rendered attractive to students by both glorious technicolour and little substance. Thus the hard graft of intensive charrettes focused on local neighbourhoods may pose more risks, and as a consequence be less attractive to an anxious educator, than organising a field study visit to an exotic foreign location where 'fan pilgrimage' (McMorran, 2015) may already predispose students to give favourable evaluations

A second implication of viewing education as a service to be delivered competitively is that it needs to be organised into standard packages or modules. If nothing else, this allows students to make choices between 'like and like', and to know the length and breadth of what a given topic involves. But Schön (1987) pointed out how dividing a programme into discrete modules constrained the integration and open-endedness of professional education. Things can be done to try to overcome this, such as having compulsory capstone modules which bring things together (Grant, 2012). But a person's learning – particularly in

relation to practical knowledge – may not fall into place in a prescribed way (Schön, 1983).

Educators who recognise this will feel uncomfortable in the contemporary university.

It might be thought that the increasing prominence of employability as a planned outcome of university education (Tomlinson, 2008) would be to the advantage of professional education. However, employability is largely construed, conservatively, as simply a set of skills and personal attributes that will allow students to compete for jobs on leaving the university, an outcome like any other that can be discretely measured (Boden and Nedeva, 2010). The modular approach to education allows work placements, increasingly featured in all academic programmes so that students might gain these skills and attributes, to be fenced off from other, more 'academic', modules where they may be introduced to ideas and literature which question aspects of the world of work. Professional education, too, is about acquiring skills and attributes that allow a student to contribute to a work-place from more or less day one; but it also views the student as a novice in a community, a community that has internal tensions, criticisms and a (sometimes contested) history that newcomers must be familiar with. It cannot avoid questions of the purpose and aims of what the activities the professionals – in this case planners – engage in, and this is viewed as part of a good professional's development. This richness is simply irrelevant to the contemporary interpretation in HE of what constitutes student employability.

The fore-going are characteristics and pressures shared across the HE sector. Within research-intensive universities – which as stated earlier are at the top of the academic status – there are particular issues. Research, in their terms, is inquiry sanctioned by well-established academic norms in the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences.

Professions, on the other hand, are understood as activities which apply research, but do

not generate knowledge themselves. Conversational references to 'top' universities, within or outside academic circles, invariably have such institutions in mind. Universities of this kind emphasise the way their research informs their teaching. Again, this will be familiar to readers of Schön (1983, chapter 2). But Schön warned that this kind of teaching failed to recognise, and hence to develop, the practical knowledge, and approaches to the acquisition and testing of practical knowledge, that professionals often need to employ in their day to day work. Wisdom and a degree of ease in thinking about values is the most significant part of using practical knowledge, and this, too, is ignored by the model of teaching as research-led (Sullivan and Roisin, 2008). It is reasonable to suppose, then, that professional education that takes practical knowledge seriously may feel particularly ill at ease in a research-intensive university.

It is clear that professional education, including planning education, may well be out of step with important trends in the contemporary university. Perhaps more significantly, universities are now managed in ways which drastically reduce the scope for teaching staff to take initiatives that might be at a tangent to the direction of travel for the university corporately. The literature suggests that resistance to these trends in the form of subversive, or somewhat progressive, practice is rare and episodic, and seldom consistently able to survive over time in current environments (e.g. Brady et al, 2010; Gulette et al, 2010). Must educators despair? This paper suggests that there may be ways of framing the circumstances planning education finds itself in that offers some reason to work for change.

For a new pedagogy of hope: teaching and learning for freedom as a goal for professional education today

Despite very different stances on the subject matter, scholars in the field of education agree that Paulo Freire (1972, 1974, 1994, 1998) has produced one of the most radical agendas for critical progressive teaching and learning to date. Chiming with others writing in the global North in the same decades (e.g. Ranciere, 1991), his work stemmed from practice in some of the most deprived areas in Brazil and Chile in the 60s and 70s, where literacy and social deprivation reached levels unthinkable in northern Europe in the early twenty-first century. His learners were adult peasants and favela-dwellers living at the edge of society, excluded and disempowered; to them Freire presents education as a palimpsest for personal development, agency and freedom. His message was powerful and took what was at the time a soft spoken and relatively sedate debate in education in North America by storm, if not without frictions (Freire, 1994; Macedo, 1998). His books have been translated into many languages and have inspired educators in developing countries since. For university teachers in the global North today Freire is a pivotal author to be aware of, but little legacy is to be found in educational practice in the UK, certainly in HE. Yet Freire's message of hope in an approach to education as an enabling process for agency to flourish seems as fitting in the current tightly managed HE context as it was in Sao Paulo's favelas.

Freire sees education as a typically human activity; he embraces our *'being human'* as the root of an education aimed at making us free, or, at the very least, making us not lose hope that the future is not pre-determined, and that change is possible, if we feel it is needed:

'I like being human because I know that my passing through the world is not predetermined, pre-established. That my destiny is not a given but something that needs to be constructed and for which I must assume responsibility. [...] Consequently, the future is something to be

developed through trial and error rather than an inexorable vice that determines all our actions' (1998:54).

Individuals as co-constitutive to the world is a central theme in his view of education. He acknowledges our being in the world as a *'relational presence'* (1998:25) that enables us to recognise our own self and agency through the recognition of our place in the wider environment:

'A 'presence' that can reflect upon itself, that knows itself as presence, that can intervene, can transform, can speak of what it does, but that can also take stock of, compare, evaluate, give value to, decide, break with, and dream' (1998:25-26).

Perceiving ourselves in the world, as part of the world, makes the world constitutive of who we are but also – crucially – the world as essentially the result of our collective being in it (1998:55). Through understanding ourselves as part of a whole, learning puts us in the *'position of one who struggles to become the subject and maker of history and not simply a passive, disconnected object'* (1998: 55). Education's main goal is, to Freire, achieving *'integration'*, seen as the combined ability to adapt to reality and *'the critical capacity to make choices and to transform that reality'* (1974:4); somebody who is integrated becomes a subject, in education as in her/his own life, and acquires the agency that somebody who simply adapts lacks. Freire sees the world in a constant *'process of becoming'* (1998:72), an unfinished collective project. He suggests that an understanding of ourselves always *'in the process of becoming'* (1998:92) and as *'unfinished'* (1998:58) is what makes each of us capable of learning, in a process that is continuous and substantial to our being human in the world:

'[...] my role in the world is not restricted to a process of only observing what happens but it also involves my intervention as a subject of what happens in the world. [...] In the context of history, culture and politics, I register events not so as to adapt myself to them but so as to change them, in the physical world itself' (1998:72-73).

Freire's theory of education is in fact a *'theory of intervention in reality, the analytical contact with existence which enables one to substantiate and to experience that existence fully and completely'* (1974:33). His message is laden with responsibilities but also characteristically liberating and hopeful, *'founded on faith in men'* (1974:33) and women. It is quintessentially political in its nature: *'No one can be in the world, with the world, and with others and maintain a posture of neutrality'* (1998:73). Because of this, *'ethical grounding is inevitable'* (1998:26) in the learning process, as is choice: *'For what and for whom do I study? And against what and against whom?'* (1998:73). Being able to discuss problems of the context translates into an ability to intervene in that context, providing the capacity to acknowledge dangers and to acquire the confidence and skills needed to confront those dangers (1974:30). This somewhat engenders a space for the *'disruption of common sense'* (as defined by Ranciere, in Grange and Gunder, 2018:10).

The social context he refers to is one strongly shaped by colonial and post-colonial legacies, riddled with inequalities, where even the definition of issues at stake (e.g. development, equality, capacity, etc) were not defined and identified locally but were the object of European or North-American thought (Freire, 1974:35). A context where needs and imperatives (for development, equality, developing capacity, etc) and the means to achieve them, seemed carved in stone and inevitable. Things in the UK today are very different, not least for the role the country, its culture and language, has had in those very processes of

colonialism and post-colonialism. But similarities can be drawn in respect to how for an individual educator, increasingly a corporate employee, the organisational and wider governance context of her educational work is viewed as externally defined, inevitable and inescapable; one so strong that resistance is futile and in relation to which the only feasible strategy is one of adaptation. Freire's message has at least as much resonance when we look at his reflection on technology and modernization. Chiming with Ranciere's 'partition of the sensible' (as in Grange and Gunder, 2018:7), he sees highly technological societies drawing on mass production apt to '*domesticate*' man's critical abilities by '*separating his activity from the total project*' (1974:31), by '*constricting his horizons*' by '*narrowing his specialization*' (ibidem) and only providing the illusion of choice through increased participation (ibidem).

Crucially, teaching is, according to Freire, not about passing on existing knowledge but about creating the conditions and paving the way for '*the production or construction of knowledge*' (1998:30), a process that is individual and personal. That is about '*entering into a dialogue[...] about concrete situations and simply to offer [the learner] the instruments with which he can teach himself*' (1974:45). Freire (1998) describes a seven-steps process for critical progressive education based on respecting all participants in education as autonomous agents and valuing their contribution and past experience, focused on nurturing curiosity, ethics and aesthetics, and on taking risks, grounded in leading by example - particularly in respect to the critical reflection on practice - and aimed at supporting the development of self-consciousness and cultural identity. Learning is, according to Freire, first and foremost experiential, as it stems from participating in reality, and his method is one which '*would identify learning content with the learning process*' (1974:45). Education is, for both the learner and the teacher, '*a form of intervention in the*

world. In addition to contents either well or badly taught, this type of intervention also implies both the reproduction of the dominant ideology and its unmasking.' (1998:90-91).

But Freire's is not an approach in black and white, whereby one either reproduces or unmasks, as he acknowledges the dialectical and fluid nature of the learning and teaching process as one that *'does not allow it to be only one or other of these things. Education never was, is not, and never can be neutral or indifferent in regard to the reproduction of the dominant ideology or the interrogation of it.'* (1998:90-91), and possibly of both.

Freire sees *'critical reflection on practice [as] a requirement of the relationship between theory and practice'* (1998:30); this is true and relevant for both learner and teacher as *'the person in charge of education is being formed or re-formed as s/he teaches, and the person who is being taught forms her/himself in this process'* (1998:31). When both learner and teacher engage in an educational process, *'we are participating in a total experience that is simultaneously directive, political, ideological, gnostic, pedagogical, aesthetic and ethical'* (1998:31). *'Epistemological curiosity'* (1998:32) is what both fuels and maintains alive the learning process, which in turn supports resistance, risk, adventure and creativity.

Epistemological curiosity is the result of reflection: of reflection on the world, and on one's position and actions in the world. Reflection is what makes the learner move from innate *'naïve'* or *'magical'* consciousness (1974:41) to critical consciousness; it enables a critical understanding of reality, and critical understanding leads to conscious critical action on the world (1974:42). What might this mean for planning education and educators?

There are clear similarities and parallels between Freire's ideas, as discussed above, and central features of Pragmatism as discussed in, for example, Healey (2009) and Hoch (2007). Pragmatism suggests that (constantly revisable) knowledge of self and of the world is

achieved through individual engagement, in social practices, with that world in all its aspects. Education encourages and creates opportunities for thoughtful, critical engagements that help the learner understand how s/he learns best as s/he learns also about the world and themselves. Given these affinities a natural port of call in exploring the implications of Freire's thinking are the ideas on professional education of the Pragmatically-influenced Donald Schön.

Reflection for meaning-making, self-discovery and change

The importance of professional planners being reflective, and becoming increasingly reflective, has long been widely accepted (see, for example, the exchange between Allmendinger (1996) and Tewdwr-Jones (1996)). In this regard planning is in step with a broad current in professional life (as illustrated, for example, by the founding of an international journal just over a decade ago entitled *Reflective Practice*; see also Peel, 2005). Arguably, becoming more reflective is a particular challenge to a profession in which critique and evaluation have been more honoured in the breach than in reality (Martin, 1989; Reade, 1987; Sartorio, Thomas and Harris, 2018). Be that as it may, whatever the size of the task, it seems unexceptional to claim that initial professional education (ie the educational foundation provided in a university) will have an important role to play if a profession's membership is to become more reflective, for example by establishing the habit of, or disposition to, reflect (McCarthy, 2011; Askew, 2004). It is significant that Schön, whose work did so much to promote the term, followed up his book on professional practice (Schön, 1983) with one on professional education (Schön, 1987). Yet within discussions of professional practice and education key terms are used in a variety of ways (Ixer, 1999). Within this paper we will focus on *frame reflection* (Schön, 1987:218) specifically and its

potential for consciousness raising and meaning making for it specifically chimes with the aspects of Freire's view of education delineated above.

Frame reflection involves re-casting the way in which an aspect of the world is viewed and understood; and in relation to professional action, re-casting what is regarded as problematical and what might constitute an appropriate response. It is the kind of activity which Jane Jacobs (1961/1965) castigates planners for failing to do: re-think grand explanations and nostrums they have been taught in the classroom in the light of the recalcitrant reality that they confront daily on city streets. *Frame reflection* is also about developing phronesis - using neo-Aristotelian terminology – or the capacity for situated judgement (Strike, 2007; Healey, 2009). Yet in her anger with planners, perhaps Jacobs underestimates how emotionally and intellectually difficult this task can be, as well as the significance of the power-relations within which planners, like every professional, works (Hoch, 1984). Though *frame reflection* can vary in scope, it is clearly something which requires a professional to call into question some assumptions, habits or rules of thumb which may be well established and to which he or she has hitherto afforded quite a degree of credibility and commitment. It is therefore an epistemological shift which can have quite profound personal and social consequences. By its nature, *frame reflection* requires a jolt, or Schönian 'surprise', and as Jacobs pointed out, the world provides those. But surprises and shocks are not guaranteed to elicit an open-minded re-thinking; they can be responded to defensively and fearfully, and the colonial context in which Freire found himself made him far more sensitive to power-relations than was Schön (Hoch, 1984). The context of HE constitutes a seemingly fruitful environment within which to nurture a critical reflective attitude and a professional posture able to equip learners for the controversial nature of planning practice and the role of planning professionals therein. Yet it may not be easy on a

personal level to do this kind of reflection, and all-too-human professionals may be tempted to avoid it, or deceive themselves when undertaking it. These are amongst the reasons that many (perhaps most prominently in the UK Brockbank and McGill, 2007) recommend that reflection be undertaken as a dialogue, in empathetic, supportive groups – we will explore the implications of this later. Given the intellectual and emotional challenge that frame reflection can involve, the ambiguity of the term ‘reflection’ can pose pedagogical dangers. One danger– which fits neatly with the temper of current higher education - is the temptation to think of reflection as entirely a matter of developing skills and routines, just as it may be tempting to reduce finding out about the world to sets of scientific protocols (Healey, 2009) .

Reflection – like any practice – will of course often involve routines, and these may become more polished and skilled over time (Moon,1999; Walkington et al 2001). Some influential writers in the field have therefore insisted that coaching and similar support is essential in order to learn to reflect (Roberts 2009, 639). Thus within nursing, Johns (2009 : 51 ff) has developed an extremely (self-styled) ‘structured’ approach to developing reflection as an essential skill for practice with an instrument (a set of ‘cues’/questions) through which practitioners work systematically. This kind of approach runs the risk of coaching people to work through, and perfect, an exercise without reminding them that the exercises have the purpose of facilitating engagement in a ‘reflexive process of self-inquiry’ (Johns, 2009:3), which is what a Freireian approach requires. It is a particular danger if the students feel that the route to good grades is to mimic particular styles of expression or vocabulary (Roberts and Yeoll, 2009), and an overflow of pre-digested advice and best practices aimed at streamlining pedagogical approaches favouring deep learning - such as those produced by the Higher Education Academy in the UK or the Commission for Behavioral and Social

Sciences and Education in the US – might just be the vehicle to such unwanted sub-product of pedagogical practices. This danger can only begin to be ameliorated if the students understand the wider purpose and potential of reflection and if they trust that the teacher genuinely understands that students may feel they need grades in the short-term as well as potential personal and intellectual development, even transformation, in the medium term. In short, the coaching and modelling of behaviour must itself be reflective, self-conscious and open to a degree not always usual in university teaching (Dickerson et al, 2016). The educator must keep in mind the desired objective of the tripartite relationship between student, teacher and reflective action (Sletto, 2010; Brockbank and McGill, 2007). Sletto (2010) illustrates how this kind of teaching will involve a particular kind of feedback and support, one that emphasises the transformative potential of reflection. Yet it is important to realise that this transformative potential applies to both student and educator; they will be mutually supporting in a process of reflection that becomes central to understanding the world as part of a process of changing it, and oneself in relation to it.

Such an analysis is a political analysis in that central to it is understanding how things are as they are, which is to understand power relations. This kind of analysis is a precursor to facilitating change. To the extent that professionals are themselves part of webs of socio-economic power relations which sustain injustice, then the changes must involve re-casting their relations with non-professionals; that is, re-thinking the nature of professionalism (Johnson, 1972; Healey, 2005; Sandercock, 1999). It is expected that this kind of reflection will involve frame/paradigm changes for the reflectors, with associated personal upheavals as they reconsider their own work, and lives, in relation to others – i.e. reconsider their personal and occupational identity (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002; Sletto, 2010).

In an educational setting, this approach can involve re-thinking the relationship between student and teacher, with the aim of exploring 'radical possibilities for promoting more inclusive, emancipatory, and democratic practices, inside and outside the classroom' (Heyman, 2001, 1). Freire (1972; 1998) famously rejected a 'banking' notion of learning, where a discrete lump of knowledge, accredited by the teacher, was transferred to the student. Understanding, in the colonial context, the oppressive role of contestable knowledge he argued for knowledge production as a joint-enterprise to which student and teacher brought different attributes, but in which both were learning. This form of education requires, and develops, consciousness-raising ('conscientization', in the awkward, but now standard, translation from the original Portuguese). Freire applied this approach to education in a community context, and for those in this tradition the boundary between community and classroom dissolves as part of the democratisation of knowledge-production (Heyman, 2007, 104). In principle, this approach can be transferred to professional HE, as the earlier discussion of contemporary HE suggested that many if not most teachers in planning are confronting circumstances which can and does create unease about their own professional identity, the value of their work and sense of worth.

Cook-Sather (2008) reports on a project outside planning education which addressed some aspects of the teacher-student relationship through encouraging shared reflection.

Students not enrolled on a particular course were used as volunteer 'consultants' on classroom practices of educators (who were also volunteers in this programme). Among the outcomes was a widespread feeling that the student consultants and the teachers developed a relationship more equal than that traditionally associated with students and educators; so that, for example, teachers might feel vulnerable to the consultant's scrutiny,

and the student consultants felt able to say whatever they thought. At its best, the re-framed relationship became collegial (see also McAteer and Dewhurst, 2010).

Within planning education, Sletto (2010) has explicitly sought to devise a course/module which encourage students to reflect on their own roles within webs of power-infused socio-economic relations. The course places students in situations where they have to engage with members of the community – relatively poor people, who are thus of a different background and culture (including in terms of ethnicity) from most of the students. It is this confrontation with difference - a version of what Schön terms 'surprise' – which is intended to trigger reflection, with teachers creating opportunities for students to have a 'dialogue about culture, race gender and other differences' (Sletto, 2010, 405) among other things. It should be possible – and would be desirable - to build into this process some shared reflections relating these considerations of power and difference to student-teacher relations; and it is difficult to envisage how these cannot but touch on at least some elements of the nature and purpose of higher education.

As noted earlier, reflection can be challenging to an individual's sense of his or her own competence and, more broadly, may ask that someone re-consider his or her own sense of self. Fleming (2007) notes how reflecting on a health promotion project revealed moral judgements of people with health issues implicit in the practitioners' behaviour, which were counter-productive in a pragmatic sense, and questionable ethically. The practitioners therefore needed to 'work on' themselves (Fejes, 2008). The key pedagogical strategy in this is the fostering of dialogue (Brockbank and McGill, 2007). This can be done in a number of ways, though some may be more able to accommodate complexity and unanticipated reactions than others. The most flexible in this respect of content and the direction dialogue

may go is to create occasions for face to face open-ended exchanges with a teacher/facilitator (McAteer and Dewhurst, 2010). More constrained and less fluid is what is in effect a mediated dialogue: via a journal (Roberts, 2009), group discussion (Brockbank and McGill, 2010), or as an addendum reflecting on a piece of assessed work (the dialogue ensues when the assessor provides feedback on the reflective addendum). In each case, however, it is important that the teacher be as reflective about her practice and reactions as the student is expected to be. This will help the teacher escape the danger of substituting ideology for reflection, and will thereby open up a route for Freirean conscientization for the teacher too. What do we mean, though, by ideology substituting for frame reflection?

One illustration is the possibility that promoting and practising reflection in relation to work, current and future, may be interpreted as a statement of the importance work should have in the life and identity of a person. There will be an understandable tendency for professional institutions, and training bodies such as universities, to promulgate the idea that putting work (and study/training) at the centre of one's being makes one a better practitioner. But arguably much of the work of most professionalised jobs is routine, and can be undertaken perfectly adequately without its being central to one's life (Johnson, 1972; Thomas, 1991). Nevertheless, there may be occasions on which work does involve issues/dilemmas which do (or should) challenge one's sense of self (Thomas and Healey, 1991). Certainly, influential discussions (from different theoretical traditions) of how planners might operate have emphasised that a capacity for sophisticated and profound reflection on values, and hence self, is a necessary part of planning (e.g. Forester, 1999; Sandercock, 1999). But one outcome of such reflection on values could be that in a given situation the demands of work are secondary to others – e.g. the claims of community or family.

Some have argued that the notion of the reflective practitioner is inevitably bound-up with power-relations inside and outside the work-setting (which, in the case of educators, is in part the setting for teaching and learning). This, too, can lead to an ideological outcome for an education which on the face of it encourages reflection. In particular, the inculcation of the habits and practice of reflection may be used to help create and sustain a particular kind of professional (Fejes, 2008); and, secondly, to bring home to aspirants to certain occupations that they may not possess the personal/social characteristics which suit them to the job (Colley et al, 2003). Yet, some have argued, understanding this, an exercise in reflection itself creates 'a space for reflection on reflection' which can lead to 'questions about how such constructions and governing processes could be responded to' (Fejes, 2008, 249); and is thus in the emancipatory vein of Freire. In its essence, it involves deliberately placing oneself in a context, and acknowledging one's own agency, again a stance with Pragmatic echoes; this provides meaning to one's activity above and beyond the nature of the environment within which that activity is embedded. It can thus be oppositional, in the sense of providing a meaning and significance contrary to that which is officially sanctioned and promoted, and hence the basis for (slowly) transforming context.

Emancipating student and educator: principles of practice and a research agenda

After reviewing literature on reflective practice and on Freire's work, the paper has provided suggestions as to ways to introduce opportunities for frame reflection in the curriculum for planning education. It has done so starting from reflections on the UK HE system, and its constraints, whilst aiming to provide a more widely applicable message of hope for radical teaching practices. The arguments' main outcome is put forward as a principle for teaching and learning practice. In fact, the hope-inducing implication of Freirian-inflected reflection is

that its emancipatory potential is inescapably experienced by both student and teacher. The dialogical process that is the essential support for effective frame reflection involves a modelling of appropriate behaviour by the educator. This must be self-conscious about the student-teacher relationship as they jointly engage in learning (even as the prime focus is student learning); and that relationship, and the learning process of which it is a part, cannot be bracketed off from the wider context of the university and the social relations and political economy of higher education which it instantiates. So it is that the teacher finds it necessary to at least begin the process of understanding the forces that may be experienced day to day as external impositions appearing from the ether; and this process is shared with, and contributed to, by the student. Both student and teacher are on the path of hope of which Freire talked. Radical change may not be guaranteed, but a sense of informed agency, which has radical potential, can be kindled.

Of course, none of this need happen; we could, in this area as in many others before, swiftly move beyond Freire to a disneyfied version of engaged pedagogy. Reflective practice can be interpreted as a set of routines to go through mechanically and/or a vocabulary and emotional register that can be picked up and demonstrated in appropriate (i.e. assessed) arenas. Educator and student remain essentially unchanged, remain cowed by an apparently recalcitrant reality they must navigate as best they can, and, above all, leave their own relationship unexplored – and unchanged. It is for planning educators, in the first instance, to ensure that it is the emancipatory potential of reflective teaching and learning that is pursued, and to engage with students in achieving at least some change in the inauspicious circumstances of contemporary higher education.

So far so good, as much as a message of hope, and a warning, can be composed on the score of critical engagement with pedagogical scholarship. But a number of questions have also surfaced whilst composing the argument presented here, broadly fostered by the very little knowledge we hold in this area, too often neglected by mainstream pedagogical scholarship.

A crucial question to address relates to how can educators help themselves and students in practical terms that reflection exercises do not just become a tick list ensuring skills and competencies are achieved. Some work has been conducted using current students attending modules displaying some aspects on reflection as informants (e.g. Roberts, 2009); this work can be helpful in drawing conclusions in respect to the informants' ability to reflect in and on practice (Schön, 1983) but its ability to support understanding of frame reflection is very limited. There appears to be no published research aimed at ascertaining frame reflection and, in particular, the potential for reflective practice to foster and engender agency (as opposed to adaptation) and ethical grounding (as opposed to neutrality) beyond completion of HE by students: does being able to discuss and reflect on problems of the context really translate into an ability to intervene in that context? Do practitioners who have been exposed to reflective teaching and learning practices in their student years develop an ability to reconsider their personal and professional identity that lasts medium to long term? What features of reflective teaching and learning support the development of a critical understanding of reality and epistemological curiosity in individual practitioners and do these features indeed support openness for resistance, risk, adventure and creativity in professional life? And finally, how does epistemological curiosity translate into an ability for frame reflection and to develop and enact epistemological shifts in professional practice?

These are questions that can be central for the development of a novel research agenda able to underpin effective progressive education in planning – and to make sure that on this issue we consider a way to concentrate on the essential, and keep track of effectiveness, and resist pressures to create the simulacra of transformation, while respecting the often harsh realities of powerful institutions (Ginn, 2014).

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