Dialogic Teaching and Moral Learning: Self-critique, Narrativity, Community and “Blind Spots”

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In the current climate of high-stakes testing and performance-based accountability measures, there is a pressing need to reconsider the nature of teaching and what capacities one must develop to be a good teacher. The Royal Society of Arts (2014) reports that pressures placed on teachers and schools to focus narrowly on academic attainment has limited teachers' ability to address students' social and moral learning. Similarly, educational policy experts around the world have pointed out that policies focused disproportionately on student test outcomes can promote teaching practices that are reified and mechanical, and which lead to students developing mere memorization skills, rather than critical thinking and conceptual understanding. Philosophers of dialogue and dialogic teaching offer a different view of teaching, one that counters mechanical, transmissive or “monologic” teaching.

In this paper, I seek to extend the notion of dialogic teaching as a method of supporting social and moral learning processes. Specifically, my focus is on answering the question: What capacities must a teacher have to engage students dialogically? Drawing on Paolo Freire and other contemporary philosophers, in section one, I examine dialogic interaction as involving a way of “being with learners” and put forth three teacher capacities necessary for dialogic teaching: self-critique, narrativity, and building community. In the second section, I examine further what is concretely entailed in the practice of dialogic teaching using research in educational psychology. I aim to highlight how dialogic teaching, unlike monologic teaching, involves the teacher's active ability to support learners' identification and exploration of their own blind spots — that is, the limits of knowledge and ability — and those of others. In the third section, I consider implications of my discussion for international policy on teacher assessment. I close the paper with considerations for future research on teacher capacity and teacher evaluation. This paper contributes to our understanding of teacher capacity and the nature and aims of good teaching.

Keywords: dialogic teaching; moral and social learning; pedagogy; Freire; teacher assessment

The relationship between educators and learners is complex, fundamental, and difficult;
it is a relationship about which we should think constantly.

— Paolo Freire, 2005, p. 107ⁱ

In the current climate of high-stakes testing and performance-based accountability measures, there is a pressing need to reconsider the nature of teaching and what capacities one must develop to be a good teacher. The recent report of the *Royal Society of Arts* on spiritual, social, moral, and cultural education in the UK suggests that the pressures placed on teachers and

schools to focus narrowly on academic attainment has limited teachers' ability to address students' social and moral learning (Peterson et.al., 2014). Similarly, educational policy experts around the world have pointed out that policies focused disproportionately on student test outcomes can promote teaching practices that are reified and mechanical, and which lead to students developing mere memorization skills, rather than critical thinking and conceptual understanding (e.g. Sahlberg, 2004; Biesta, 2011; Pring, 2012). These policies, and the practices they engender, unfortunately contribute to the general public image of teaching as a simple, mechanical task of content delivery. This image is a severe distortion of the complexity and difficulty of teaching; it obscures the essential connection between teaching and the moral development of learners.

Philosophers of dialogue and dialogic teaching offer a different view of teaching, one that counters mechanical, transmissive or “monologic” teaching. In this paper, I seek to extend the notion of dialogic teaching as a method of supporting social and moral learning processes. Specifically, my focus is on answering the question: What capacities must a teacher have to engage students dialogically? Drawing on Paolo Freire and other contemporary philosophers, in section one, I examine dialogic interaction as involving a way of “being with learners” and put forth three teacher capacitiesⁱⁱ necessary for dialogic teaching: self-critique, narrativity, and building community. In the second section, I examine further what is concretely entailed in the practice of dialogic teaching using research in educational psychology. I aim to highlight how dialogic teaching, unlike monologic teaching, involves the teacher's active ability to support learners' identification and exploration of their own blind spots — that is, the limits of knowledge and ability — and those of others. In the third section, I consider implications of my

discussion for international policy on teacher assessment. I close the paper with considerations for future research on teacher capacity and teacher evaluation.

Throughout the paper, I emphasise that dialogic teaching, understood as a way of being with learners, aims at promoting learners' social and moral learning by initiating learners' productive encounters with difference and otherness. Here, I am concerned with one aspect of social and moral learning processes, namely, how students come to recognise their own fallibility as part of gaining the self-reflective and self-critical capacities needed to move beyond self-interest towards empathic recognition and respect for the other. By examining dialogic teaching through the lens of the teacher's necessary capacities, I aim to underscore that any educationally valid notion of teaching must recognise its complexity and its inherent connection to promoting social and moral learning. This paper contributes to our understanding of teacher capacity and the nature and aims of good teaching.

FREIRE ON *SPEAKING WITH LEARNERS* AND THREE CAPACITIES OF THE DIALOGIC TEACHER

In his text, *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, Freire distinguishes between two modes of speaking as a teacher in a way that helps identify a central difference between dialogic and monologic or transmissive-style teaching.ⁱⁱⁱ Although Freire is discussing modes of speaking, his distinction does not amount solely to a difference in verbal exchange patterns between the two “styles” of teaching.^{iv} Rather, Freire's distinction reveals that dialogic teaching implies a certain kind of relationship to learners, one that I refer to as a way of *being with learners*, which attends to learners' social and moral development (in addition to their knowledge acquisition). Dialogic teaching as a way of being with learners, as I will explain, entails three necessary (but not

sufficient) capacities of the teacher: the capacity for self-critique; a narrative capacity; and the capacity to build community.

In monologic transmissive-style teaching, we may expect to observe a teacher mostly engaged in what Freire calls “speaking to learners”, that is, giving information or asking questions with fixed right or wrong answers (2005). Freire differentiates “speaking to learners” from “speaking with learners” in a way that identifies the educative relationship between teacher and learner connected to dialogic teaching. A teacher who adopts the mode of speaking *to* learners is taking an authoritarian stance and not listening to learners. Although the teacher may at times seem to talk *with* learners, in truth, it is only to listen to themselves, their own correctness, and “underline the power of their own voice” (Freire, 2005, p. 114). The principle underlying this mode of teaching is to affirm a given power structure and a separation between teacher as the one who is knowledgeable and learner as the one who is lacking knowledge. In contrast, dialogic teaching is associated with democratic teaching. By speaking with learners, the teacher is following a different underlying principle: she seeks to give learners a voice and listen to them, even when expressing legitimate authority by speaking *to* learners. Freire clarifies that this act of “speaking with” is not permissive. Permissive teachers, like authoritarian teachers, do not talk with learners, rather they take an anything goes attitude and “abandon learners to themselves” (Freire, 2005, p. 114).

Freire’s distinctions point out that in dialogic teaching the roles of teacher and learner, so clearly demarcated hierarchically in traditional teaching, have not simply switched. The teacher’s experience in speaking “with” learners is thus neither solely active and authoritative, nor passive and permissive. Rather, with the designation of “with learners,” Freire is locating a certain kind of interaction between teacher and learner that incites learners to learn what views and ideas

counter their own and challenge them. This means teachers are involved in a two-fold task. First, they must provide learners space to have a voice, that is “to say their critical discourse” and not be silenced (Freire, 2005, p. 116). At the same time, they must provide learners with the opportunity to recognise that their voice is not “limitless”; having a voice requires taking responsibility for what you have to say, being truthful, and not hindering others from having a voice (Freire, 2005, p. 116). Cultivating the learner’s voice means cultivating an individual who can express a viewpoint and at the same time recognise and respect the views of others.

Freire’s discussion of “speaking with” is part of his underlying view that dialogic, “problem-posing” education is grounded in a particular ontology and theory of mind that greatly contrasts with that of monologic, or “banking education”, as he also calls it. The latter understands the world as ready-made and fixed, such that the educator’s task is thus merely to determine how the world should enter the child’s mind, so that the child can properly “adapt” to a world he or she has no ability to change. For Freire, however, the idea that there is a dualism between mind and world is flawed.^v Human beings, on his view, have the capacity to transform the world, not just adapt to it, and in doing so, they become co-creators of the conditions of their co-existence with others. This connection between mind and world Freire describes again using the notion of “withness”: Whereas monologic teaching teaches learners to be “in” the world, separate from it as observer, dialogic education teaches learners to be “with” the world — an idea I return to below (Freire, 1973, p. 63). Teaching dialogically, or as I define it here, teaching as “being with learners,” draws out each learner’s ability to be “with” the world. To do this requires certain capacities of the teacher, which I turn to next.

The capacity for self-critique

Freire's idea of *speaking* with learners calls attention to a certain way of what I am calling *being* with learners. This is seen more clearly in Freire's point that the teacher must equally recognise that she has a right to a voice, *and* that her voice is not limitless. This is necessary in order for the teacher to be able to mediate the interactions between learners who each have a right to a voice, and who each must recognise that their voice is not limitless (i.e. must hear the voice of others). The idea that teacher's must be aware of their own voice and its limits is also implied in what Nel Noddings calls "executive monitoring" or metacognition involved in dialogue, which describes the act of monitoring one's "own contributions to the dialogue" (1991, p. 163).

Applying this activity to teaching means taking on a self-critical stance. When teachers are *with* learners in dialogic interaction, they acknowledge themselves in an ethical relationship in which they must simultaneously be listening and interpreting the contributions from students in order to guide them toward critical reflection upon themselves and others.^{vi} This ethical relationship also involves that the teacher can listen to her own inner-dialogue in order to monitor what she is saying and doing in her responses to learners.

This act of self-monitoring is connected to what Donald Schön (1983) calls "reflection in action", and what J.F. Herbart (1806/1902) and Max van Manen (1991) call "tact"; it implies that the teacher recognises that she may be taken by surprise by an unexpected question or perspective shared by a student, and must in turn shift her thinking and action in-the-moment.^{vii} The dialogic teacher monitors her interactions reflectively because she recognises that she is vulnerable to error, that is, to encountering her own blind spots arising in interactions with learners. The capacity for self-critique is a way of describing the teacher's disposition towards her own fallibility, as well as her active ability to seek out and identify those moments in which

her thoughts and actions need modification or correction on the basis of her changed understandings of learners.

The capacity for self-critique is at the heart of dialogic teaching, because as Freire and others have emphasised, in dialogic teaching, the teacher is also a learner.^{viii} In dialogue, the teacher is relearning the material with the learners, learning how they understand it and make sense of what is presented, and on that basis, learning how these particular individuals need to be guided in order to continue to learn from their interactions with the world and others. But self-monitoring implies not only tracking what you are learning from learners but also being acutely aware of one's default position of authority in the dialogue, which is partly based on knowing the curriculum, but also based on being socially sanctioned to "speak loudly and a lot" and "command some attention" as the monologic teacher would (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 29). How one uses this position of authority is a choice. In dialogic interactions, the teacher seeks to "recreate" her position so that she is both "speaker and *listener*" and to "invite students to recreate themselves as listeners and *speakers* in a new classroom script" (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 29-30, emphasis mine).

Narrative capacity

A teacher's simultaneous oversight over the learners' interactions with each other and with the material of learning, as well as over her own interactions, points to a certain narrative capacity that is essential to being *with* learners in dialogic interaction. Various thinkers have found ways of speaking about the teacher's task which help describe this capacity. Freire speaks of teachers needing to learn to "read the class", as if it were a text to be "decoded, comprehended," and this involves being attentive to the students' "syntax; their manners, tastes and ways of addressing

teachers and colleagues;” and, the “rules” by which they govern themselves (Freire, 2005, p. 88). Similarly, van Manen, points out that teaching involves a “teacherly awareness” of how and to what extent she is connecting to learners (1991, p. 111) as well as a sensitive ability to “read the inner life” of learners which entails interpreting learners’ “inner thoughts, understandings, feelings, and desires from indirect clues such as gestures, demeanour, expression, and body language” (1991, p. 125). Such descriptions of seeing the class as a text speak to the need for teachers to be able to find out where students are at, individually and collectively, in their understandings of the world and their ability to interact with others.

Robin Alexander brings in the metaphor of a teacher navigating a map, which also helps illuminate a teacher’s capacity for narrativity as I define it here. Dialogic teaching, for Alexander, is guided by the principle of “cumulation,” which describes the teachers’ and learners’ processes of building upon “their own and each others ideas and chaining them into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry” (2006, p. 38). This activity, which Alexander argues is the most difficult for teachers to master of his five principles of dialogic teaching, requires that the teacher has “a conceptual map of what is to be taught, the ability to think laterally within and beyond that map, and an appreciation of where children are ‘at’ cognitively” (2006, p. 49). I would add to this that the teacher’s narrative capacity requires also gaining an appreciation of where the students are ‘at’ socially, morally and emotionally.

Taken together these metaphors of the teacher’s activity of teaching through dialogue point to (what can be called) the teacher’s capacity for narrativity. Narrative capacity is the ability to constantly be attuned to the cognitive, emotional, and moral abilities of students, to hold their ever-evolving “stories” in one’s mind, so as to be able to navigate through that terrain in order to continue to imagine what is possible. A teacher may notice, for example, that a

student who was always joyful and generous is suddenly unwilling to share during a group problem-solving task, or a student who rarely listened to peers and often interrupted them, now took in another student's idea and acknowledged its importance. Narrative capacity is thus a precondition for the ability to follow the principle of cumulation, that is, of gathering together and building on what has come before in dialogic interactions, which, I agree with Alexander, is essential to dialogic teaching. In this way, dialogic interaction in its attention to social and moral learning involves the teacher helping learners discover what they are capable of and not yet capable of in the realm of human interaction; this involves helping them discover other perspectives—ones that they had not previously acknowledged—and take these in to inform further thinking and choices.

On this basis, we can point once again to a contrast to Freire's image of the monologic teacher. There, the notion of "narration" comes in, but importantly, it has a dramatically different meaning.^{ix} The monologic teacher "narrates," meaning they *tell* the story, and the story—the facts, values, or any content of the curriculum—is fixed before the students have even entered the class (Freire, 1973, p. 57). The monologic teacher has the task of telling the story while the students merely listen, and in the process that story becomes "lifeless" and "petrified" and leads students to "memorise information mechanically" (Freire, 1973, p. 57-58). In this way, "banking" education "serves to obviate thinking" (Freire, 1973, 63). There are underlying implications in this view of teaching: that human beings are ahistorical, and that they do not transform their thinking and perceptions of the world in continuous growth and learning, such that both self and world changes.^x Instead, they "adapt" to reality as fixed (Freire, 1973, p. 71).

In sharp contrast, to have the capacity for narrativity means to recognise the perfectibility of all human beings, that is, that they are capable of growth and learning from others as historical

beings.^{xi} The “story” of the students that the teacher forms is one to which the students also contribute. Narrative capacity not only involves the teacher’s ability to take note of students’ ways of being and developing, but also to communicate her findings with students so that they can contribute to her understandings and “correct” or “ratify” these (Freire, 2005, p. 90). As Freire notes, “the ‘class as a text’ gradually [...] builds an improved understanding of itself”, and thereby can contribute to “new knowledge about itself” (2005, p. 90). In learning environments in which students are building communities together, the voice each learner is developing is not meant to be one entirely of self-interest. Rather, it is to be one that can participate democratically by listening to others’ perspectives, as well as sharing one’s ideas, and understanding how both one’s own and others’ views fit into larger pictures of humanity. In sum, the teacher’s narrative capacity extends beyond understanding a student’s cognitive ability and growth to understanding the relationships that are being formed with and among students, and these must be relationships of care and mutual recognition.

The capacity for building community

Finally, being with learners in the sense I develop it here, describes a way of being that requires the teacher to have an overview of what kind of community is being built with learners in the learning environment. Turning to Martha Nussbaum’s discussion of engagement with narrative arts can help us to illuminate how to describe the teacher’s capacity in dialogue as the ability to build a community of equal participants. Nussbaum points out that stories and novels are important for engaging with different perspectives, but can “cultivate our sympathy unevenly, directing our attention to some types of human beings and not to others.” (1997, p. 101). Part of the task of a critical reading and teaching of stories and novels is finding its “prejudices and

blind spots” and looking beyond what is on the page to discover what is missing (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 101). Whose views are left out of the picture? Are we being asked to sympathise with one group over another, and why? Underlying Nussbaum’s remarks is a particular pedagogy that I view as dialogic. Dialogic teaching builds community by having a view of whose voices are being left out, and who, if anyone, is being silenced, and by addressing the needs of those learners as well as the needs of the group as a whole. The aim then is for each learner to see him or herself as a participant in the growing democratic life of the classroom.

The capacity to build community means having a disposition towards consistently trying to understand the role of silence within dialogic interactions. It means understanding that the use of a particular language itself can have a dominating and in turn silencing effect on students who may not desire to use, or feel capable of using, the language in the same way as the teacher. Both bell hooks (1994) and Lisa Delpit (2006) warn of the potential of language in classrooms to have an oppressive effect, rather than a liberating one, because of its potential to silence those who speak non-dominant languages or, speak in ways other than those adopted by the teacher. In such cases, the interactions between teacher and learner --though mediated by language-- are not “dialogic”; they have diminished and become anti-dialogic.

To prevent oppressive, anti-dialogical interactions within learning environments, the capacity to build community involves the teacher navigating two interrelated sets of tensions. The first is the tension between the recognition that, on the one hand, in any dialogue, there must be silence, for some participants necessarily must be listening, and on the other hand, that silence does not always imply listening, but could imply that the participant is feeling excluded from the dialogue.^{xiii} The second is the tension between the need to allow diverse languages to co-exist in the classroom —both literally (as hooks emphasises, which means allowing different dialects, or

non-dominant languages to be spoken)^{xiii}, and figuratively, (which means allowing diverse takes on reality, and diverse sense-making processes to enter the dialogue)— and the need to help learners understand and communicate in the culturally dominant language that is the language of public participation, and therefore of power.^{xiv} The teacher who is building community navigates these tensions in her ability to hold these contradictory positions simultaneously in the mind while engaging students. The capacity for building community is grounded in the responsibility a teacher has to students to help them learn the existing ways of knowing, thinking and co-existing, while at the same time, recognising that in the future they may need to contribute to changing these, and must have the critical capacity to do so.

Taken together, these three capacities — self-critique, narrativity, and building community— work interdependently in a way that helps the teacher to understand *what has happened* or *what is happening* within the dialogic classroom, but also to maintain a critical perspective on *what is possible* and *what is necessary* for students to learn, both with respect to subject matter and with respect to social and moral interactions. These capacities serve to support an environment in which learners can discover the limits to their knowledge and ability and begin to question these limits. Teaching that is dialogic incites self-reflection in the learner, such that the learner turns inward — “consciousness is turned in upon itself”^{xv}— and begins to question the taken-for-granted, and seek out new ways of seeing and being in the world. In this way, dialogic teaching helps learners deal with “limit-situations”, to use Freire’s term, that is, it helps learners deal with situations in which they are challenged by their encounters with the world, and which therefore require critical reflection (Freire, 1973, p. 69, see also pp. 89-95). As

I clarify below, this means that dialogic teaching can be viewed as a way of helping learners discover the blind spots that are part of the experience of being human (English 2013).

DIALOGIC TEACHING AND THE EXPLORATION OF “BLIND SPOTS” AS A MORAL TASK

Dialogic teaching, on the view I present here, is grounded in the recognition that learning is not simply a step-by-step continuous accumulation of information; it is discontinuous as a result of our encounters with new ideas, objects and interactions and the accompanying experiences of uncertainty, doubt, frustration of not immediately understanding something the new (English 2013). To say the structure of learning involves discontinuity is to say that it entails encountering the limits of one’s knowledge and ability — one’s blind spots — or as I have referred to it elsewhere, the negativity of one’s experience (English 2013).^{xvi} Here, I use the terminology of blind spots metaphorically, because it is particularly useful to capture both the individual aspect of experience — my blind spot is particular to my own learning history— and the interconnection between oneself and the world— I only recognise that I had a blind spot on the basis of an encounter with a world and others that are in some way unfamiliar to me, and thus present me with a limit to my knowledge and experience. Dialogic teaching involves teaching in a way that supports learners’ struggles to find out about the world through participation in the world. But this “finding out” cannot amount to merely receiving information from an authority; rather it requires the experience of what does not fit, what contradicts one’s ideas, what goes against one’s expectations, such that one is productively interrupted in a way that calls out thinking.^{xvii}

Educational psychologists Fritz Oser's and Maria Spychiger's (2005) two concepts of instruction help to further clarify this notion of dialogic teaching and its connection to the teacher's capacity to support students' experiences of encountering their own blind spots.^{xviii} In their conceptual and empirical research, Oser and Spychiger differentiate between transmissive and dialogical approaches to instruction on the basis of how a teacher addresses (or fails to address) students' errors or difficulties with the material of learning. Their work identifies concrete differences in the activities of teaching that help us understand how the nature of dialogic interactions are different than those of transmission: teachers engaged in dialogic interaction, as opposed to those engaged in transmission, attend to students' thinking processes by helping them identify, engage with, and learn from their own blind spots.

From their studies of classroom interaction, Oser and Spychiger demonstrate that teachers working in the mode of direct transmission overlook and avoid student difficulty and error and fail to make these moments into opportunities for learning (see also, Alexander, 2006). Oser and Spychiger point out that this creates what they call a "Bermuda Triangle" that is often seen in teacher-centered, or direct, instruction. The Bermuda Triangle takes on the form of the teacher asking a question, and getting a wrong response from one student, then a correct response from a second student, after which she moves on. The authors point out that teachers in this way completely miss the learning opportunities present in the classroom: "The teacher and second student already knew [the answer] and for the first student everything went too quickly" (Oser and Spychiger, 2005, p. 163). The opportunity to build off misconceptions and see how they connect to common ways of conceiving among those in the classroom, or in society at large, is lost (Oser and Spychiger, 2005, p. 163).

What is missed in particular in these moments, as the authors point out, is the opportunity for students to learn what *not* to do or how *not* to think, which they refer to as “negative knowledge”. Negative knowledge, as they demonstrate in this and other studies, is vital for learning what is epistemologically valid and correct or morally justified (Oser and Spychiger 2005; Oser 2005). Teachers who only seek out right answers and become “stuck” in the Bermuda Triangle are led to form habitual modes of instruction that avoid students’ misconceptions altogether, a didactic model they call a “Didactic of Error Avoidance” [*Fehlervermeidungsdidaktik*] (p. 164). When teachers do not view error and broader forms of discontinuities in learners’ experiences, such as confusion, doubt, perplexity or frustration, as part of learning, or when they avoid those moments altogether— perhaps thinking that, in doing so, they are helping a child— they in fact hinder learning opportunities from being acknowledged and taken up (English 2013). In this sense, they limit the learners’ pathways of cognitive and moral growth (English 2013).^{xix}

The authors contrast the “didactic of error-avoidance” with dialogic forms of teaching which follow a different instructional approach, one they call a “Didactic of Error-Encouragement and Error-Exploring” [*Fehlerermuetigungs- und aufsuchensdidaktik*] (Oser and Spychiger, 2005, p. 164). On this approach, teachers aim to facilitate students’ exploration of what they do not yet understand, or cannot yet do (Oser and Spychiger, 2005). This relates to what Alexander associates with the aim of dialogic teaching in which “learners learn to articulate what they know and do not know, and what they need to learn” (Alexander, 2008, p. 93). Using this approach, learners learn to question what they know and do not know, or what they are or are not able to do, and in turn confront the associated experiences of discontinuity, such as doubt or frustration that come from encountering new ways of thinking or new modes interacting with

others (English, 2013). Supporting learner autonomy is thus not simply letting learners do as they like, with the teacher merely observing, as some false interpretations of Deweyan progressivism may lead us to think. Rather, it means supporting learners' experiences in a way that helps them discover *for themselves* wherein their limits to knowledge and ability lie, so that they can choose to address those limits and thereby learn and grow.

If classrooms are spaces for merely confirming what a child already knows, and in turn overlooking what a child does not yet grasp, then that child not only loses the opportunity to grasp a particular point in a lesson that she did not yet understand (her own particular blind spot), but also the opportunity for social and moral learning. The type of social and moral learning I am referring to is that in which we learn from others' errors or misconceptions. In monologic classrooms, the teacher does not make room for multiple perspectives, such that what a student shares when she speaks a right or wrong answer turns out to have no bearing on the content of the lesson, and therefore no bearing on others' experiences of learning. In contrast, the dialogic teacher, who seeks out and discusses misconceptions or problematic interactions between students, uses her capacities (such as those mentioned above) to draw out the diverse voices in the classroom, and incorporate these into decisions about what is to be taught and learned. Dialogic teaching, by presenting diverse perspectives, invites each learner to see the fallibility of his or her own views, engage in self-reflection and questions about right and wrong, and explore and imagine other possible ways of seeing the world.

By giving learners the opportunity to see multiple possibilities and viewpoints as relevant and valuable, dialogic teaching not only allows learners to see that the path to coming to new ideas involves tentative, muddy or even wrong notions. In this way, it also allows them to be, as Dewey says, held in "suspense", which he identifies as an essential moment of all learning

processes, in which we struggle to understand something new (see e.g. Dewey, 1916/2008, p. 155). Being held in suspense to “stop and think” has moral meaning: we can reflect upon and discover what our own and others’ blind spots consist in. In turn, we can come to recognize how our ways of judging and acting, and those of others, may not have been ones associated with respect and concern for others.

Seeking out right and good becomes part of a process of communication and collaboration with others, not an isolated and potentially idiosyncratic process in the mind, nor one based solely in following authority. In this search, learners gain an understanding of the reasons to choose one path over the other. Since the options were contemplated and made explicit through dialogue, the search provides learners with an understanding of what may be harmful to others. It also provides points in the thinking process to return to if the chosen path does not yield expected results (see Oser/ Spychiger, 2005, p 165-167; see also English 2013).

Cultivating empathy and humility

From the foregoing it should be clear that I am not advocating a notion of dialogic teaching as simply meaning allowing children to make mistakes and struggle. Rather, my aim has been to underscore that dialogic teaching necessarily involves providing experiences in which students encounter “limit-situations” by means of which they can find, reflect upon, and discuss their own blind spots and the blind spots of others. Although these are often revealed in mistakes, the concept of “mistake” is too narrow to fully grasp the sense of what a “blind spot” could mean. In moral and social realms of learning, blind spots point to what I elsewhere have called “the pragmatic-moral dimension of the negativity of our experience”, that is, those aspects of experience that are revealed when we encounter an unexpected situation in our interactions with

others and have to ask ourselves, “What should I do?” We enter this realm of experience when we are in a dilemma that is not easily resolved with recourse to principles or a naïve trust in a random trial of action, rather, the only way out is to struggle through the situation, self-critically reflect and consider all of its particularities.^{xx}

Dialogic teaching involves what I have called “being with learners”; the teacher is there to help learners learn how to be “with” the world and others. For Freire, being “with the world” means seeing oneself and others as part of the world— and “being part” of the world means participating in it by expressing democratic dispositions of “listening to others,” “respecting them”, “questioning” “criticizing” and “debating” (2005, p. 116-17). It also means exercising one’s active ability to reconceptualise one’s initial way of perceiving the relationship between oneself and the limit-situations one encounters: “It is not the limit-situations in and of themselves which create a climate of homelessness, but rather how they are perceived by men as a given historical moment: whether they appear as fetters or as insurmountable barriers.” (Freire, 1973, p. 89).

For education to contribute to learners’ active ability to perceive limit-situations as “fetters”, students must be exposed to new ideas, perspectives and experiences which challenge their own within formal learning contexts. Although my focus has not been on how dialogic teaching contributes to the development of virtues, from my discussion two virtues that are developed in this process can be highlighted: humility and empathy. The exposure to diverse perspectives and sense-making processes provides learners with the opportunity to see that there exists a concretely different perspective than their own, and in this process they can recognise their own fallibility, a pre-condition for developing humility. Equally, through dialogic interactions, students recognise, not simply the power of their own voice, but the relation of their own voice

to that of others, and how others' experiences and perspectives contribute to developing one's own views; this contributes to students' ability to realise their capacity for empathy.

Moreover, because dialogic forms of education expose students' and teachers' diverse perspectives and sense-making processes, they also contribute to students' ability to imagine that any ideas and beliefs they hold to be true could be otherwise. Developing learners' capacity to imagine that things could be otherwise contributes to moral agency in that it supports learners' abilities to act on their imagination by seeking out concrete change to improve personal and social conditions (Greene 1995). In imagining how one's views could be otherwise, the virtues of empathy and humility come together, since such imagination involves seeing things from another's perspective, and thereby recognising that our own initial view is limited, in so far as we were not aware of the different perspective of the other, which has now come to light. In building the capacity to recognise and respect the other, dialogic teaching supports learners to critically, reflectively and imaginatively interact with the world.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES ON TEACHING ASSESSMENT

How do we evaluate the invisible?

It is widely recognised around the world that democratic societies need to support young people to develop social and moral capacities in order to flourish in and contribute to those democratic societies. It is common for policy makers to use terms like 21st century skills, which include the ability to "think critically" and "collaborate". A recent Council of Europe white paper goes further to elaborate the essential need for young people to develop "reflective" and "self-critical" dispositions in order to thoughtfully engage with diversity (CEMFA, 2008, p. 29).

It is also widely recognised that much of the responsibility falls upon teachers and schools to ensure that students are properly gaining social and moral competencies. Some regions, like Scotland, have gone so far as to clearly articulate moral and social learning outcomes into their new *Curriculum for Excellence*. But even where this is not the case, for example, in England, inspectors still assess whether teachers are promoting “equality of opportunity and recognition of diversity” and whether they are providing for moral and social development, including whether students are developing “the ability to be reflective about their own beliefs” and “the ability to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on [moral and ethical] issues” (Ofsted, 2015, p. 36).

How is this to be assessed? What kind of evidence counts?

A recent study suggests that in OECD countries evidence gathered from classroom observation of teaching is heavily weighted (Santiago and Benevides, 2009, p. 14). But, as Lee Shulman pointed out almost thirty years ago, classroom observation often “fails to tap many of teachings’ critical dimensions” (1988/2004, p. 342). He likens it to “photographing the Mona Lisa with a black and white Polaroid Camera”, because it does not capture the complexity of what goes into teachers’ choices for action (1988/2004, p. 342).

The serious problem with observation for assessment is that teachers’ capacities which foster learners’ moral and social development, like the ones I discussed above, are to some extent *invisible* — they are hidden within the way the teacher thinks, her dispositions, her ways of listening, contemplating, and being attentive, and the internal monitoring which informs her interactions with students. If teaching assessors do not thoroughly understand teachers’ necessary capacities for fostering moral growth, we run the risk of teachers’ not trusting the system which is assessing them. Without a trustworthy system, teachers may face a serious ethical dilemma:

either “teach to the inspection” by getting students to appear well-behaved according to social norms—sitting quietly in rows, individually filling out worksheets—knowing that this likely pleases inspectors but potentially limits students’ moral growth; or, follow a dialogic mode of teaching, knowing that this enhances students’ moral growth but may engender different behaviours—playing, talking, interacting and working through conflicts—all the while fearing that inspectors will misjudge the situation.^{xxi}

Many policy makers have acknowledged the insufficiency of accountability measures that causally link teacher success to student test scores, despite the continued prevalence of such measures. But educational policy also needs to address the danger of external observation and the allure of the superficial. What is needed are complex methods of going beyond the immediately observable, and this means getting at teachers’ ways of thinking and knowing which inform their judgements to act.

CONCLUSION

I have argued throughout this paper that we cannot lose sight of the notion that teaching is a moral endeavour that requires certain capacities to facilitate moral and social development. As we move further into the 21st Century, questions of what makes a good teacher are no longer isolated to regional or national discussion. Rather, they are increasingly part of a global concern for establishing comparative educational paradigms that acknowledge that young people have to be adequately prepared to thoughtfully confront the diverse experiences they will encounter in life. What educators, researchers, policy makers decide to view as good teaching and what they, as a consequence of this view, take as evidence of good teaching, affects all pupils as they come into a diverse world. It is therefore increasingly important that educational research continue to

discuss the nature of good teaching and the nature of legitimate processes of evaluating teaching.

I contend that as a basic requirement any legitimate evaluation of teaching practice must take into account the hidden aspects of teachers' ways of thinking and knowing.

NOTES

ⁱ An earlier version of this paper was presented at The Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain Annual Meeting 2015, Oxford. Part of section 2 was presented at the World Educational Research Association Annual Meeting 2014, Edinburgh. Thanks to all blinded reviewers and session participants for their important feedback.

ⁱⁱ The use of the term capacity is meant to capture both the teacher's dispositions and abilities as dynamic, situated and evolving and as part of the teacher's processes of learning with and from students in the practice of teaching. This usage is in line with Dewey's use of capacity as receptivity and also as capability and power (1916/2008, p. 46). This usage is also in line with recent research on teacher capacity which highlights teaching as a complex and situated process by which teachers have to know and be able to do certain things while at the same time continuing to learn (e.g. McDiarmid and Clevenger-Bright, 2008; Grant, 2008). The term "competency" has become associated with meaning a fixed skill, that can be practiced in a way that it causally produces certain learning behaviours and outcomes. As such, the term has been understood extremely narrowly and is in some way a poisoned term in education because of its connection to strategically and mechanically getting learners to certain outcomes. For that reason, I have chosen to use the term capacity.

ⁱⁱⁱ Readers may also know this as Freire's distinction between problem-posing education, which is dialogic, and the banking model of education, which is monologic (Freire, 1973). This distinction closely connects to Dewey's distinction between teaching as transmission, which he also calls "traditional" schooling, and reflective forms of teaching associated with inciting students to think and inquire (Dewey, 1916/2008). Both notions of dialogic teaching and reflective teaching are connected to notions of teaching as a reflective practice (e.g. Schön, 1983). I discuss teaching as a reflective practice at length in English 2013.

^{iv} On the idea that assessing dialogue in teaching goes beyond assessing the content or structure of speech see e.g. Nystrand et.al (1997); and, Burbules/Bruce (2001).

^v Many of Freire's ideas, including his problem with this dualism, resonate with Dewey's educational ideas. Freire acknowledges in a later text that his critics accused him of not doing anything original and rather just borrowing ideas from European and North-American thinkers, including Dewey (Freire, 1998, p. 57 ft 24). His response is that he is original, in a Deweyan sense of the word, in that he is "taking the ordinary and applying it in a new way" (Freire 1998, p. 57 ft. 24). On my view, while both Dewey and Freire are highly relevant to the current age, Freire's way of describing the issues calls upon readers to explicitly consider the social justice issues at stake in how we make decisions about education (issues which are much more subtle in Dewey). Research suggests that the connection between teachers' capacities and social justice needs further exploration (Grant 2008), and because of the way Freire and critical pedagogues approach these issues, I think they are particularly important to this discussion.

^{vi} There is a growing body of philosophical literature on the indispensable role of listening in teaching see e.g. Garrison, 1996; Haroutunian-Gordon and Laverty, 2011; English, 2011; Waks 2015. Some of these studies have been taken up in political science in the development of democratic theory, see Dobson, 2014. Additionally, empirical studies on listening suggest there is a correlation between the way a teacher

listens and whether a student is supported or hindered in thinking and learning, e.g. Davis, 1996; Hintz and Tyson, 2015; English, Tyson, Hintz, in preparation.

^{vii} See also on tact as connected to *phronesis* and involving self-critique and improvisation English 2013, especially chapter 7.

^{viii} see e.g. Freire 1973; see also Dewey 1916/2008, and van Manen 1991.

^{ix} Thanks to Nicki Hedge, for pointing out that this is worth making explicit.

^x Freire's concept connects to the German notion of *Bildung* as put forth by Humboldt (1793/2001).

^{xi} Underpinning Freire's educational views is the idea that all human beings are capable of learning; this is in line with a long tradition of thinking on the "perfectibility" of human beings. For more on this concept see English, 2013.

^{xii} On the notion of silence in education see e.g. Schultz 2003; Forrest 2013. Empirical research has suggested that students are silent for different reasons, which can be either due to listening or due to fear of speaking and making a mistake (Hintz, 2011). This points to the fact that teachers need to deeply attend to the reasons for silence.

^{xiii} hooks discusses allowing her students to speak their first language in a class, and then translate it, and also how she has infused her speaking and writing with the black vernacular that she grew up with (hooks, 1994, p. 172).

^{xiv} Delpit p. 68, writing in the US, discusses that all children have the right to learn standard English, as the dominant language for participation in democratic life (2006). Of course, the English-language is becoming increasingly the international language of communication, and this adds complexity to questions around teaching in countries where it is not the national language, but still a language that is associated with power outside national boundaries.

^{xv} Freire 1973, p. 66-67. Freire is drawing upon Jasper. On this idea of self-reflexivity as an essential characteristic of dialogue see also what Hannah Arendt (1981), drawing on Socrates, calls the "two in one" wherein the self is both speaker and listener (on how this connects to moral learning see also English 2013, chapter 5).

^{xvi} see also, Benner 2003; and Benner and English, 2004.

^{xvii} I have detailed this notion of teaching as interrupting the experiences of learners' in English 2013, especially chapters 4 and 7.

^{xviii} All translations of Oser/Spychiger in this paper are mine.

^{xix} Internationally, research indicates that instruction in subjects in the STEM fields, which were commonly taught by direct teaching, should be taught using dialogue (e.g. Mercer and Littleton 2007; Alexander 2006). Policy in mathematics teaching in the US (e.g. NCTM 2014) is now also explicating the significance of student struggle for learning. These policies are supporting research that shows the validity of students' experiences of discontinuity, of arriving at limits to thinking and knowledge, which cause learners to be challenged, and also confused or perplexed in a way that is supportive of conceptual understanding. What these policies are missing is a strong sense of what makes such discontinuity "productive". I have argued that this needs to be seen in the way the experience incites self-reflection, not in whether it arrives at particular pre-defined outcomes (English 2013).

^{xx} English 2013, 152-154. In this context, I also differentiate this from the corporeal-existential and the theoretical-experimental dimension of the negativity of experience, each of which I develop in connection to the philosophical thinking of Herbart and Dewey, as well as in connection to Plato and contemporary phenomenology. On the long-standing philosophical traditions that considered notions of negative morality, and how it connects to present-day thinking on democracy and education see also Benner, von Oettingen, Peng and Stepkowski, 2015.

^{xxi} Reward-sanction schemes of accountability create similar ethical dilemmas for teachers who are confronted with either "teaching to the test" out of fear of losing their job, and/or the school losing

resources, or, teaching in ways that follow pedagogical principles that they believe actually help students learn, but do not necessarily immediately get students to desired test outcomes.

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