Analytic Literature Review

Conceptualising equity

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Developing equity in schools with Kline's Thinking Environment

In what ways does Kline's Thinking Environment create the conditions for developing equity?

What are the implications for education policy and practice?

In this paper, I begin by stating the purpose of my literature review and the methodological approach undertaken. I then go on to clarify my professional concern and the purpose of my research. Next, I draw on various definitions of equity, the key concept of my research and present my working definition to be used in my research. Using the ten components of Kline's Thinking Environment (2009) to structure my literature review, I explore the concept of equity by critiquing key studies and reflecting on my personal and professional experience.

Why conduct a literature review?

First and foremost, the purpose of this literature review is to draw on the thinking of others to clarify my thinking about the concept of equity, a key concept for my research (Lily, 2002). Having attended an online lecture led by American educator Cornelius Minor, in October 2021, who was talking about his latest book 'We Got This' and what students need from educators, I was struck by something he said. Whilst explaining the importance of students needing safety and security, awareness, understanding and connection, he paused and said emphatically, 'This isn't about being kind; it's about equity'. Up until that point, much of what he had said resonated with my experience of teaching and particularly with Kline's Thinking Environment which I wanted to research. What I hadn't ever considered before was the concept of equity.

THE REMIX MY TEACHERS CRAFTED...

Teaching Is More Than Just About Accessing Content & Curriculum: Here is what I needed then...

I needed safety and security:

1. I needed to feel good about myself and my community.
2. I needed tools to ensure that I could make a world better than this.

I needed awareness and understanding.

1. I needed space to process the world around me and to express my feelings in the ways that made sense to me.
2. I needed ways to understand all of the people who might be experiencing that same world in different ways.

I needed connection.

1. I needed ways to connect what I was learning in class to the realities that I was seeing around me.
2. I needed proximity to people and ideas who could affirm me AND to people and ideas that could challenge me.

www.kassandcorn.com - Twitter: @MisterMinor

A slide from Minor's presentation, October 2021

As humans, we have a fundamental need to make sense of the world we inhabit, to feel in control and to be able to create meaning (Kegan, 1982). Kline's Thinking Environment provides the tools to be able to do this for ourselves and for each other in our personal and professional lives. Kline developed the concept of the Thinking Environment in 1973 when she co-founded the Thornton Friends School near Washington DC. In addition, there has been some research conducted on the Thinking Environment in business and higher education (Havers, 2008; Jeremiah, 2015; Hunter, 2018; Sternberg & Dawe, 2018) but there has been very little research conducted on the Thinking Environment in schools.

What was my methodological approach?

My methodological approach has been informed by selecting appropriate research terms as well as standing on the shoulders of giants by 'snowballing' (Van Wee & Banister 2016: 284). Having decided that my key words were 'cultures of equity' I began searching using google scholar. I soon realised that many of the results were not education focused so I amended my research terms to 'equity in education'. After selecting a few relevant texts to scrutinise from each google scholar search, I then allowed my searching to be influenced by particular references in those texts and 'snowball'. For example, when starting my literature review, my thinking about equity was concerned with focusing primarily on educators in schools. However, as I began reading, I became increasingly curious about

how equity is or is not created through student voice which led me to exploring a range of literature concerned with: exploratory talk; student-teacher relationships; democratic, critical, radical and dialogic pedagogies; pedagogies for social justice and language acquisition. As I read each text, snapshots from my professional experience as a teacher and personal life as a daughter were evoked which led me to evaluate the text's pertinence and relevance for my research. Thanks to our doctoral sessions this term and a recent supervision, I have been led to scrutinise further literature notably Gilligan's work on voice and Cushing's work on language policies in education. The ensuing deadline for this paper has caused me to pause my reading for now.

What might at first might appear a rather chaotic and boundaryless approach, I would argue that my approach has been framed by my preoccupation with Kline's Thinking Environment which is central to my research. By this I mean that whichever reference I have been tempted to follow, I have asked myself how it might relate to the concept of equity and Kline's work. I am aware that there is much I have ignored that may be relevant, however, my approach has without a doubt enabled me to clarify what I mean by equity and how Kline's Thinking Environment might be a useful tool for enabling it to flourish in schools.

What am I concerned about?

Informed by my various identities as child, daughter, student, teacher, middle and senior leader, education consultant, parent, Time to Think facilitator and now doctoral student, I am shocked by how Dewey's reflection over a hundred years ago is still woefully relevant in the neoliberal context we are living in today:

> 'there is not adequate theoretical recognition that all which the school can or need do for pupils, so far as their minds are concerned is to develop their ability to think.'
>
> Dewey, 2016: 133

This resonates directly with Kline's concern expressed at the beginning of 'Time to Think' that we are currently 'living in an epidemic of obedience' (1999: 15). Watching a recent documentary about Birbalsingh's Mikaela School, 'Britain's Strictest Headmistress' (2022) confirms Kline's concern. A recent reflection by an experienced headteacher I know was that schools are not really places for thinking. Nor it would seem, are they places in which all children and adults can flourish with increasingly restrictive and prescriptive policies at government and school levels (Cushing, 2021). Whilst I enjoyed whole school

responsibilities and supporting and developing colleagues, my experience of senior leadership in three different schools was that the headteacher and thus the rest of the senior team were consumed by meeting target driven outcomes and proving to external agents such as local authority advisers, DfE advisers or Ofsted that we were worthy of their approval. What was evident was that there was a complete lack of trust in these relationships: no desire to understand the school's particular context or offer any practical support. Ball's terrors of performativity (2003) sadly resonate with the fear like response I witnessed at times both in many colleagues and in myself as we experienced an inner conflict of having to produce the right metrics whilst denying what we knew: that teaching is human and complex (Macmurray, 2012).

What is the purpose of my research?

I continue to be driven by an innate desire to enable others to flourish. For me, this is about enabling them to think for themselves, make sense of whatever it is they think they need to make sense of: experiences; feelings; planning, to explore, ponder, challenge, question, critique, synthesise. This is not an exhaustive list of the types of thinking children and adults alike might want to engage in. However, what rings true for me, from Kline's forty years of observing thinking, is that whether we are able to think in such ways, as ourselves and for ourselves, depends upon the behaviour of those who are with us whilst we are thinking (Kline, 2009). Although Kline has identified ten specific behaviours or components which enable thinking (attention, equality, ease, appreciation, encouragement, feelings, difference, information, incisive questions, place), it is the quality of attention that we give as the listener that determines the quality of that thinking.

When I reflect back on my life experiences, there are few individuals who have been able to listen to ignite others' thinking. Individuals who are able to listen in a way that shows they are genuinely fascinated by what the other person is thinking, who although they may want to interrupt to agree or disagree or comment, choose not to because they know that continuing to provide their generative attention will enable the other to reach a level of thinking in which they can better understand themselves and whatever they are thinking about. The more I reflect on what seems to be an acceleration of activity over the past twenty years, the need to be productive, to consume, it appears that we have become human doings rather than human beings.

Having studied and practised Kline's Thinking Environment with my family and led workshops for many educators in the UK and internationally, I believe it has significant

potential to develop equity in schools. Despite schools' often entrenched hierarchies of power, I think that the principles and practices of Thinking Environment can enable a shift in leadership from 'postestas' (hierarchical power) where leadership and therefore voice is in the hands of the few to 'potentia' (activist power) where leadership is shared and all voices are heard (Mycroft, 2020).

Therefore the purpose of my research is to enable educators to create cultures of equity in which they and others can think for themselves as themselves.

I theorise that my research will contribute in a small way to the creation of schools as places of connectedness (Bills, & Howard, 2016) in which educators and young people as equals, can feel and be more agentic despite the opposing winds of neoliberalism. I now go on to define equity.

What do I mean by 'equity'?

According to Unterhalter, achieving equity is about both recognising the importance of spaces which foster discussion of concerns, considering those participating to hold valuable opinions and valuing the process of creating such relationships which foster inquiry mindedness, discussion and negotiation (2009).

According to the OECD, equity in education is defined as:

> personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, are not obstacles to achieving educational potential (fairness) and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (inclusion).
>
> (OECD, 2012: 9)

This definition raises further questions about the meaning of 'educational potential' as well as questions regarding what constitutes a basic minimum level of skills.

Ainscow's notion of an ecology of equity (2016) is helpful in that it is teachers' practice and the school itself, as well as the socio-economic context, the cultural backgrounds of students' families, parental choice, local governance and the national educational policy context which impact equity. The recent school closures in 2020 sadly reflect this ecology of equity at play (Longfield, 2021).

Interestingly, the OECD report on Equity and Quality in Education (2012) cite neoliberalist mechanisms such as unregulated parental choice and lack of parity between academic and vocational learning as factors exacerbating inequity in education.

Achieving equity is the major challenge facing education systems globally (Ainscow, 2016). Considering how it might be achieved, however, requires scrutinising what the purpose of education is (Spratt, 2017). Priestley makes a persuasive case for the purpose of education being threefold, recognising the importance of qualification alongside less easily measurable purposes such as socialisation and subjectification (Priestley et al., 2020). Here the economic imperative of schooling, gaining skills to enter the workforce, sits alongside the social justice imperative of developing independence of thought and critically engaging with social, cultural, political traditions and contexts and emancipation. Such purposes chime with Macmurray's view that education is about learning to be human achieved through our relations with each other and in community (2012). It seems to me that the mutuality of being and becoming human is impossible without valuing both children's and adults' voices. The United Nation's vision for inclusion: 'to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences' (2016) suggests a democratic learning environment in which children and adults are in dialogue with each other to create educational experiences in which are accessible (best corresponds to requirements), relevant (best corresponds to preferences).

Given the definitions and purposes of education described above, my working definition of equity for this paper is as follows:

> an equal sharing of power so that regardless of age, status, identity, race, gender, background, life experience, children and adults alike are heard.

Informed by this working definition I now go on to explore the concept of equity in education using Kline's ten components as a structure.

Attention

Our familiarity with the classroom instructions 'pay attention' and 'listen' reveal much about the power dynamics between adults and children and the type of attention expected of children in schools. It is children who need to pay attention and to listen for the purposes

of acquiring knowledge. In such an environment, correct answers are sought, and one's capacity to think is dependent on the adult in charge. Typically, the student is in listening to reply mode: listening to supply the correct answer. Equally, the teacher is in listening to reply mode, so they can continue to deliver the next chunk of knowledge. This is a transactional relationship commanded by the adult. In the world of the Thinking Environment, listening is about being fascinated by what someone else is saying or thinking aloud. Such listening is about providing a quality of attention which enables the other person to think freely without judgement or interruption. Being able to generate this quality of attention is foundational to voice and agency and therefore to achieving equity. Enabling young people to become agents in their own learning, requires a shift in power dynamics in which rather than being vessel fillers, teachers are educational archaeologists (Baroutsis et al., 2016) concerned with not only the content they are teaching, but are attentive to each student as a person, their interests and how to make what they are teaching relevant to them. Furthermore, such a person-centred approach helps to realise the potential of all particularly those who are marginalised. This certainly resonates with my experience of working in alternative provision and crafting a curriculum partly based on students' interests and what colleagues could offer (as well as tending to the qualifications requirements) so that educators were able to develop trusting relations with each student, understand them, listen to their stories as they became ready to share them. In listening to ignite mode, being genuinely fascinated and respectful of another's thinking, some of our damaged young people were able to disclose traumas which were preventing them from flourishing.

Providing such attention for adults in schools is equally important. As line management and professional development have become increasingly about meeting externally driven targets and focused on the latest government policy e.g. knowledge rich curriculum, teaching standards), it can be tempting for school leaders to mirror similar power dynamics to those at play in the classroom, telling teachers what they need to know and improve on. There is little space if any for educators to make sense of what they know might be working or not working in their practice and how to improve it in the presence of another or others who are listening to ignite their thinking without judgement or interruption. The considerable and welcome work on coaching (Lofthouse et al., 2010; Mycroft & Sidebottom, 2017; Lofthouse, 2019; Lofthouse & Whitehead, 2020; Mycroft, 2020) demonstrates how educators' voices can be better heard. In the HertsCam Network, through our one year Educator-Led Development Programme (formerly Teacher Led Development Work programme), groups of educators made up of a diversity of colleagues teaching and support staff, are supported to identify a particular professional concern that they would like to address, develop a strategic action plan and then lead that process of

change in their school. More often than not, because of the generative attention they experience from the school-based facilitator and their colleagues in the group they become agents of change, making a difference to their and colleagues' practice as well as student learning (https://www.hertscam.org.uk/vignettes-the-participant-experience.html)

Kline's component of attention resonates with Macmurray's philosophy of becoming and being in which through our relationships with each other, child-child child-adult, adult-adult, we grow.

Hart & Risley's research (1995) which led to the discovery of the 30 million word gap between 3 year olds from different socio-economic backgrounds demonstrated the inequities present in language development. What their research led to was a more fascinating discovery that it is the quality and diversity of language which is more important for language development than the quantity of words (Masek et al., 2021). Masek et al. found out that it is the quality of attention and the facilitation of prompt and meaningful exchanges back and forth between caregiver and child is a powerful driver of language. In terms of my working definition of equity and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard, this is significant and resonates with what I call the fourth stream of attention in Kline's Thinking Environment where the listener or thinking partner closely follows the thinker's thinking and uses their own words when speaking. What Hirsh-Pasek et al. refer to as a 'communication foundation' that child and care-giver co-construct during interactions has implications for ensuring that our interactions are more equitable (2015: 1071). Of the 3 dyadic features: a child's joint engagement with symbols (words & gestures); the routines & rituals shared by the parent and child and the fluency and connectedness of the exchange including verbal and non-verbal acts, it appears that it is the fluency and connectedness which seem be a particularly strong predictor of later language development which has particular importance for at-risk children. The research also seems to demonstrate that interruptions to fluent and connected conversations might impair word learning. What they refer to as a conversational duet between care-giver and child resonates with Kline's understanding of attention and the destructive potential of interruption.

The call for the quality of attention Kline promotes is more pressing when considering the prevalence of patriarchy and its influence in how children, men and women, through their experiences suppress what Gilligan calls their 'honest voice' (2018). Despite being born with a voice and instinctively having the capacity to seek out others and engage responsively with those around us, by the age of eight, young girls are aware of hiding what

they really think and are alert to perceived ideas about how they should be and behave. Like Kline's attention, Gilligan's solution of radical listening is

> a way of listening that gets to the root of what is being said (and not said), that tunes our ear to the conversation that goes on under the conversation and that opens us to being surprised, by replacing judgement with curiosity. An approach to listening that creates a potential for discovery and transformation.'
>
> Gilligan, 2018: 745

Although some may consider this type of listening appropriate in therapeutic contexts and one-to-one interactions such as counselling, I argue that giving attention in this way is urgently needed in all our interactions, particularly in schools, one-to-one and group, child-child, child-adult and adult-adult.

Equality

It is Kline's component of equality in which regardless age, status, identity, race, gender, background, life experience, we are all equal as thinkers (2009). Everyone's thinking matters.

Respecting each other as equals as thinkers requires a shift at a conceptual level on the part of educators. Firstly, it requires that educators understand that children are in the process of both 'being and becoming' (Uprichard, 2008: 03) and that as educators, they are working in partnership with children creating opportunities for everyone's thinking, knowledge and experience to be shared. For Dewey and Freire, this more equitable relationship in which power is shared by educators with children supports the development of agency and societal renewal (Beckett, 2018).

What is interesting to note is that despite the persistent imbalance in which educators are in control of children's educational experiences, children are capable of participating much more in educational decision making and it is their right to be involved (Quinn & Owen, 2016) as mentioned earlier in the UN's vision for inclusion. This has particular significance for those who are already marginalised by society. Quinn and Owen caution that attempts by educators to enable young people to enjoy more active participation need to be carefully structured so that it is not those who are most popular or willing to participate who dominate the space. Therefore, regardless of your status or perceived status within your peer group, your voice and thinking matters as much as anyone else's.

However, putting this into practice requires further deliberation. For Kline, equality is also about sharing the available time to speak equitably between those present. How might educators ensure that everyone's voice is heard? What about those who have not been born into language rich families? Those who are not used to being truly listened to and not interrupted? Those who are more introvert or sensitive for not everyone is comfortable to share their thinking aloud with others as Cain's powerful work on introversion reveals (Cain, 2012)?

Respecting each other as equal thinkers is rooted in the belief that educators' role is to promote thinking and learning. Mercer et al.'s work on dialogic pedagogy based on Barnes' exploratory talk, demonstrates that nurturing student participation and agency requires careful and explicit instruction on the part of educators to create the conditions for productive and meaningful thinking (Mercer et al., 2019). Due to the pressures felt by educators to cover an increasingly packed curriculum and enable students to arrive at a correct answer, exploratory talk is rare. This reminds me of Lofthouse and Leat's discovery that even when young people are given the opportunity to think together, inquire and question, they are not convinced of its use or relevance (2011). Like the senior leaders and teachers in their school, the young people were keenly aware of the standards agenda and the dominant purpose of education being that of qualification. In the prevailing neoliberal context where regurgitating memorised knowledge is paramount, the pragmatic solution is not to waste time thinking but to be told the answer by the teacher. Here we can see that neoliberal education systems favoured by policy makers predominantly in the west, deploy a discourse which maintains the inequitable power structures privileging the adult as expert and the child as novice, ignoring the capacity of children to make sense of events and experiences in their lives (Dixon, 1999).

I wonder whether Kline's repertoire of strategies such as thinking pairs, rounds and dialogue can help to ensure that all are treated as equal as thinkers and that everyone's voice is heard in an equitable manner for adults and children alike in the various contexts in which they gather together in schools: when thinking about the relevance of Armitage's 'Remains' in the classroom, when thinking about how to play a particular phrase of music in a rehearsal, when pausing during a football training to think about a particular technique or pass; during a line management meeting, a departmental meeting, a professional learning workshop or indeed a meeting with Ofsted inspectors. All equal as thinkers listening without judgement or interruption.

Ease

The component of ease for Kline is about creating psychological safety and offering freedom from internal rush or competition (1999). Ease is of particular significance in relation to the shift from welfare liberalism from the 1900s to neoliberalism from the 1970s. Whilst the former embraced individual freedom with state funded public services enhancing such freedoms for all, the latter classed individuals as economic agents and saw public services marketised (Spratt, 2017). Supported by powerful global institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD, neoliberalism has had significant impact on education systems around the world for the past four decades (Ball, 2003). Rather than seeing education as a public service, 'essential to collective well-being' (Davies & Bansel, 2007: 254), like health, education has become part of the market economy, its purpose being to create competitive individual economic agents who can serve economic needs. Schools and universities have become subject to market forces relying on monitoring systems and outputs to compete. In England, the pursuit of neoliberalism has resulted in marginalising the teaching profession with successive governments succeeding in controlling teaching through ever increased powers (Mahoney & Hextall, 1997; Wragg, 2005) and an insidious suite of surveillance mechanisms from narrow performance measures, increased external accountability, league tables, controlled curricula, leaving schools in competition with each other and undermining their capacity to respond to issues of equity and social justice (Kaur, 2012). Practice is packaged, de-contextualised and simplified as a series of techniques so that teachers' role is reduced to one of technicians and pupils as objects subjected to being measured and controlled (Levin, 2000).

With Kline's component of ease in mind, I argue that the cultures of performativity characterised by judgement and comparison to incentivise and control are not only stifling the potential of children and adults in our schools (Ball, 2003; Kulz, 2017) they are rendering our education system unsafe. The increasing commodification of education, high stakes accountability and narrowing of the curriculum (Thomson, 2020) in the past ten years has also witnessed a steady increase in pupil exclusions (Timpson, 2019) and rising numbers of teachers leaving the profession (DfE, 2019). Those who do not fit into the 'cult-like cultures' of the factory for learning (Kulz, 2017) are ejected (Collins & Porras, 1997). With norm-referenced high stakes testing institutionalising failure (Seldon, 2021), the most vulnerable children and young people, that the neoliberal cause purportedly seeks to support are further traumatised, marginalised or excluded (Fine, 2018).

Creating safe spaces requires emotionally intelligent leaders to focus on the psychological environment of their organisations to develop cultures where everyone feels safe, valued and able to participate in problem solving (Nabben, 2015). This is an increasingly difficult task for school leaders in which the performative context outlined above can generate fear.

Rodenburg's three circles of energy, ways of being present in the world are perhaps helpful in better understanding how, despite the hostile external environment in which schools currently exist, educators can generate psychologically safe environments for each other and the children in their care (Rodenburg, 2007). The first circle of energy is focused inward and characterised by withdrawal and attempting to be invisible. The third circle is focused outwards and is about control and force. Whilst both can be useful in certain situations, it is the second circle of connection which is where we can be fully present as ourselves and connect with others. Indeed, it is when we are able to create meaningful connections with others that 'deep, active and thorough learning' can occur. This clearly has implications for interactions in schools between all adults and children alike and how as educators we can feel at ease and enable others to feel at ease. Indeed, Bernstein advocates that attention is paid to the 'acoustic of the school' (2000: xxi) noticing who feels safe to talk and who doesn't.

Creating the conditions in the classroom for children to feel psychologically safe to think aloud and express themselves, firstly requires an understanding of how power is realised amongst the children. Aware of the social hierarchies present and the rules for participating, some may choose to participate (dominant voice), others may participate voicing what they perceive to be acceptable but not necessarily their own voice (sub-voice) and others, perhaps because they don't feel they have acquired the acceptable language will not be confident to engage (yet to be voiced voices) (Arnot & Reay, 2007). Segal et al.' in their work on dialogic pedagogy equally caution what might look like student voice as simply 'voiceless participation' in which children's spoken contributions are simply aligned to the teacher's voice and curriculum norms (2016). Rather than expressing what they think, they are expressing what they can remember, seeking approval from the teacher. Enabling all children, particularly those from marginalised groups to feel safe to share their thinking requires teachers to create opportunities for young people to express themselves in their own way and be listened to by others. It also requires that teachers problematise the curriculum and seek connections with controversial issues directly relevant to young people. Although Segal et al. advocate for educators expanding students' repertoire of conceptual tools and their capacity for deliberation by modelling deliberative discourse and by adopting different roles such as partner, devil's advocate,

moderator, I believe that having structured opportunities to make sense of what they have just been experiencing in terms of input (teacher talk, text, video) will help young people feel at ease.

For adults in schools, particularly with the performativity agenda and the pressures to 'close the gap', it is worth reflecting that 'discourse refers to both what can be said and thought and also to who can speak and with what authority' (Foucault cited in Dixon, 1999: 2).

Kline's thinking pairs and other building blocks such as dialogue and discussion in which the previous components of attention and equality are present, can help to create an easeful environment in which all feel safe to share their thinking and not simply the 'right answer'. Although developing more participatory learning experiences requires careful management on the part of the teacher or chair of the meeting, it is ultimately about power sharing and equity.

Appreciation

In Kline's Thinking Environment, appreciation is about valuing others for who they are rather than what they have achieved (2009). It is also about noticing what is good and saying it by offering genuine acknowledgement of a person's universal qualities. According to Kline, praise and appreciation help human thinking by unwrapping confidence and making us feel good. When we appreciate someone, the hormones in their brain are immediately affected: oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine are activated enabling them to think better by creating psychological safety. Because of our inherent programming to focus on the negative rather than the positive, appreciation needs to be practised in a 5:1 ratio of appreciation to criticism. Reflecting on this, highlights how much of education is framed as an improvement agenda. The focus is on what is not working, targets that have not been met. Adults and children alike are valued for what they have achieved, the results they have delivered and not for themselves (Reay & William, 1999). Developing caring relationships is seemingly irrelevant in the performativity world (Glazzard, 2013) and becomes increasingly challenging for school leaders and educators to appreciate others for who they are when they are not trusted or valued by policy makers or external agencies (NAHT, 2021).

Appreciation is not about being expected to perform a public act of gratitude in the dining hall in third circle energy (Birbalsingh, 2022), it is about, experiencing meaningful

connections with others and valuing qualities in each other. Although in practice, this requires careful facilitation and practice, it is about reconnecting with our basic values which are rooted in compassion (Giroux, 2003). In my online meetings with facilitators and participants from a range of schools, we end with a closing round in which the question, What have we valued about this meeting/workshops/network event? is posed. Silently, in the chat, responses are posted. It is a quiet moment of reflection in which we are able to connect with each other as people and show our gratitude for each other.

For appreciation to work for children and young people, it may be that preliminary work is required on the part of educators in adopting a radical pedagogy which honours young people's experiences, connecting what happens in classrooms to their everyday lives (Giroux, 2003). Creating carefully structured and facilitated opportunities as mentioned earlier for young people to express themselves in their own words and make sense of what they are learning might create conditions in which every young person might genuinely enjoy an experience in which they find a quality to value in someone else.

Despite the hostile external conditions, incorporating regular opportunities for appreciating each other can help to restore our humanity and connection to each other.

Encouragement

The component of encouragement means giving courage to others to venture wholeheartedly to the unexplored edge of their thinking. This is achieved by those listening adopting an easeful warm presence, providing their generative attention and upholding the promise not to interrupt (Kline, 2020). It seems to me that underpinning encouragement is a belief in critical and dialogic pedagogies seeing young people as capable of thinking critically and participating in emancipatory knowledge building and sharing (Egan-Simon, 2022). Educators are concerned with developing young people as change agents enabling them to engage in dialogue. Bermudez (2015) suggests a range of strategies for developing critical thinking such as problem posing and reflective scepticism but none of this ensures that all voices will be heard as I discussed earlier. For young people to be truly encouraged to engage in thinking which will shift them outside of their comfort zone, careful facilitation is required (Alexander, 2008). As suggested before, Kline's rounds, thinking pairs, dialogue and discussion and Time to Think council are practical ways of creating a compassionate environment in which everyone is encouraged to think deeply and critically.

It is clear that this way of being with young people is entirely antithetical to the transmission model of knowledge and current dogma of knowledge rich pedagogies in which students are told what to think by teachers rather than thinking for themselves. As concerning, is that the knowledge rich curriculum driving recent educational reform has now seeped into teacher professional learning. The introduction of the Early Career Framework (ECF) in September 2021 has resulted in top-down implementation of a prescribed body of knowledge delivered by government approved providers. The idea that teachers might have different starting points, experiences or the opportunity for teachers to inquire and make sense of things for themselves are ignored.

Therefore, it becomes even more compelling to resist such oppressive neoliberalist policies through our every day practices as educators and young people and ensuring that in all our gatherings from the classroom to the staffroom we are giving courage to each other to express what we really think (Zembylas, 2019).

Feelings

Research in the field of neuroscience with those who have suffered brain injuries is revealing that thinking, reasoning and decision making are inextricably intertwined with emotions. Furthermore, emotions not only inform decision making, they motivate the process of learning (Cavanagh, 2016).

For Kline, the component of feelings is about welcoming emotions and appreciating that allowing emotional release (e.g. frustration, sadness, joy) can restore thinking (1999). The human system is made up of a head, heart, gut: we feel, therefore we think, therefore we are. When there is fear in our system, fear of letting our feelings show, adrenaline and cortisol abound. This resonates with Cain's reflection that children 'stop learning when they feel emotionally threatened' (Cain, 2012: 254). My experience tells me that the same is true for adults. Kline goes on to say that expressing our feelings releases any sense of internal competition, allows us to be at ease and do our best thinking for ourselves and to provide that generative attention for others.

The component of feelings is fundamental to acknowledging our humanity. By nature, we are relational beings, 'born with a voice and the capacity to communicate our experience and with the desire to engage responsively with others' (Gilligan & Snider, 2018: 5).

Creating safe spaces where children and adults are encouraged to express their feelings and understand the feelings of others and heal fractures in connection is one way of mitigating against the hierarchies that exist within schools. Gilligan and Snider go on to say that encouraging empathy and compassion for others' suffering or humanity renders it difficult to maintain or justify the dominant patriarchal culture, reminding us that regardless of gender, we all need each other as equals to flourish (2018). It seems to me that forging humane environments with the components already discussed, with emotions accepted as being interwoven with our cognitive selves, empathy, can help us to develop narrative trust as we learn about each other's experience as they see it (Brown, 2021). This is as relevant when learning about quadratic equations as it is when discussing the budget or during a post-exclusion meeting.

Kline's component of feelings is relevant to Zembylas' concept of resistance as an affective movement of becoming which as opposed to being progressive or emancipatory, can create uncomfortable feelings of tension and ambivalence for educators and young people alike (2019). However, rather than individual acts of aggression or violence against oppression, critical engagement with ideas that create affective spaces for alternative counter-conduct practices against neoliberal education practices. Carefully facilitated opportunities for thinking pairs, dialogue and discussion in small groups or whole class and in meetings and workshops can engender a sense of agency and contribute to acts of resistance. The question is how to ensure that such opportunities are not simply giving the illusion of resistance but in fact contributing to its proliferation (Zembylas, 2019). Within HertsCam, participants in our Educator-Led Development Programme are supported to lead change based on their identified professional concern. Whilst many projects help to promote equity, for example, projects focused on supporting marginalised young people, Zembylas' cautionary note makes me wonder to what extent projects about retrieval practice are simply conforming to the qualification agenda.

Difference

Kline's component of difference is about championing our inherent difference of identity and thought. It is also about welcoming divergent thinking and different group identities (2009). Implications for educators therefore is to see themselves as agents of inclusion and social justice, respecting and responding to human differences in young people so that they are included in the daily routines in school rather than being excluded (Pantic &

Florian, 2015). Working collaboratively with other professionals and families to better understand how the wider social context might influence disadvantage and exclusion and become aware of resources to better support young people can help foster stronger teacher – pupil relationships and better enhance their learning experiences. This resonates with my experience of working in alternative provision as a senior leader, however, in mainstream settings, with a full timetable and classes of thirty, it can be challenging for teachers to mobilise such collective agency. Indeed, Pantic and Florian state that research since the 1980s has demonstrated that school structures exacerbate children's learning needs and can have adverse effects on vulnerable young people (2015).

Embracing Kline's component of difference also necessitates a pedagogical approach which is collaborative and focused on the conditions which shape practice and can contribute to helping develop more inclusive systems and practice. However, the neoliberal no excuses schools place the responsibility on the individual to change themselves, to comply to the school structures rather than the school trying to address structural inequalities regarding, language, race, gender or poverty (Cushing, 2021). Furthermore, neoliberal discourse renders terms such as 'social justice', 'success' and 'choice' as decontextualised objective truths pathologising those whom the accompanying policy web does not accommodate (Newman, 2019).

It would seem we have gone back a hundred years confusing appearance and obedience with learning and effectiveness (Thomson, 2020) as Dewey noted:

> at its worst, the problem of the pupil is not how to meet the requirements of school life, but how to seem to meet them – or how to come near enough to meeting them to slide along without an undue amount of friction'
>
> Dewey, 1916: 136

Despite all that has been learned since Dewey, the rise in exclusion rates in England demonstrate that schools for many, particularly the most vulnerable, are still not places where they feel they belong (McCluskey et al., 2019). This matters.

Cushing's powerful critique of the neoliberal approach demonstrates how rather than welcoming linguistic diversity, at the macro level education policies since 2010 and 2015 have perpetuated standardised English with teaching standards being used as a tool for measurement and surveillance (Cushing, 2021). Consequently, at the meso level schools feel coerced into producing policies which mirror the government's to satisfy external

accountability measures or risk academisation. At the micro level, teachers are positioned as language policy managers. Deficit framing which underpins much of the neoliberal education reform places the blame on vulnerable children and their families for any academic or social challenge as is seen with Corliss in Britain's Strictest Headmistress. 13 year old Corliss is confronted on his first day for being late, arriving as the bell rings and is made to repeat 'Yes, sir' until his voice matches the projection of the senior leader's. Later in the programme, Corliss is told that if he wants to stay at the school he needs to change his behaviour and that no-one else can do that. There is no attempt to seek to understand or help Corliss understand why he might be behaving in certain ways. For Goessling, deficit framing which casts school leaders and teachers as missionaries who will 'fix' poor kids, is an insidious form of racism (Goessling, 2018). Many of the children aged from 5-16 at the Alternative Provision I worked in for two years had been excluded from increasingly zero tolerance schools for behaviours which for the most part, were a consequence of neglect, abuse or trauma.

Kline's component of difference has serious implications for curriculum design and how educators interact with each other and with children and families so that space is created for counter story telling so that experiences that have not been voiced are heard (Goessling, 2018).

Information

Information in Kline's Thinking Environment is about three distinct areas. Firstly, it is about ensuring people have access to what they need to know to think well. This might be in the form of reports or papers to be read before a meeting. Secondly, it is about recognising social context and welcoming people's lived experience, the wisdom of the group. Finally, it is about dismantling denial. For example, rather than ignoring the elephant in the room, it is about dealing with what is real and true.

The first aspect of the component of information has implications for educators in their relations with students as well as with parents and each other. With students, this might be about how they provide access to resources so all students can engage as fully as possible. For example, flipped learning might be an appropriate strategy where students can read the chosen text or watch a particular video prior to the lesson so they are able to spend a greater amount of time exploring their response to that particular resource. With parents and colleagues, it might be about sharing particular information (e.g. child's report,

draft school policy, literature on a particular pedagogical approach) with them before a meeting rather than tabling any papers so that they have had time to read and process the documents and can effectively participate in the meeting sharing their reflections.

The second aspect of information concerns the extent to which the knowledge, lived experience and wisdom of those in the classroom or meeting space is mobilised. In this paper, I have demonstrated how at the macro level, a pedagogy and politics of certainty abounds however, healthy democratic practices require that educators problematise practice and value young people's experiences, connecting what goes on in classrooms to their everyday lives and their particular social contexts (Giroux, 2003, Minor, 2021). The same is true for adults in schools. Whilst the wealth of evidence-based practice in education is welcome, crafting time and space for educators to collectively critique such evidence drawing on their own experiences and knowledge of the children in their particular social context is as important (Lofthouse, 2021). Frost and Durrant's methodology of development work which underpin HertsCam's programmes values educators' experience by foregrounding their values, their capacity for scholarship and encouraging them to learn from others' experience (Frost & Durrant, 2002).

The third aspect of information refers to the dismantling of denial. As Kline says, individual denial is one thing, 'I am not working too hard, I can manage on six hours sleep' but organisational denial can normalise corrupt behaviours and autocratic leadership (Kline, 2009). This certainly resonates with my experience of senior leadership in one school where bullying behaviour on the part of the headteacher aimed at one particular colleague in a meeting was met with silence from the rest of us, myself included. Aware of my having been in the school for six months I waited for more experienced colleagues who knew the headteacher better than me to comment but nothing was said, the meeting moved on. Kline refers to this as stage one of denial: what is happening is not happening (2009: 72). Too frightened to speak but feeling uncomfortable by the denial I was witnessing and was party to, I quietly stood up, left the room and did not return. Following the meeting, one of the experienced deputy headteachers sought me out showing his shock at *my* behaviour. The next day, I apologised to the colleague who had been targeted in the meeting for what had happened and for not calling it out but she dismissed it as a matter of no importance. Kline refers to this as stage two of denial: it happened but it was not that bad (2009: Ironically the school's mantra was work hard, be nice.

Incisive questions

Incisive questions free the human mind of an untrue assumption lived as true (Kline, 1999). Living with untrue assumptions can limit our potential and aspirations, preventing us from living a more meaningful and happy life. Removing assumptions frees people to think for themselves with clarity and creativity.

Democratising educational practice according to Gillet-Swan & Sargeant, is dependent upon educators challenging their assumptions about children's capacities, autonomy, power and agency (2019). One way of achieving this is by engaging with young people to hear directly from them and collaborating with colleagues to challenge each other's assumptions about particular students (Ainscow, 2016). In my experience with HertsCam, facilitating reflective activities which enable adults to question assumptions they may have about young people as well as their own capacities to teach or lead change can be transformative and help create conditions for equity.

The view that rigorous intellectual activity can only occur in a context of individual competition in which knowledge and reason are superior to feelings and emotions is based on an untrue assumption about the separation of cognition and emotion (Gannon, 2020, Cavanagh, 2016). This untrue assumption arguably lies at the heart of why England's children are the most examined in the world (Bousted, 2022).

Earlier in this paper, I have discussed the importance of ease; creating spaces which are psychologically safe and the role of feelings in our capacity to think. Embracing inclusive and critical thinking pedagogies encourage ethical thought and behaviours enabling young people to identify and question assumptions they might be making. By fostering active participation from all, and welcoming a multiplicity of voices, educators and young people alike can make new connections for themselves (Kienzler, 2001).

Place

Kline's tenth and final component of place, is about creating an environment that says to others 'you matter'. This is both about how we physically show that through our face as well as how we shape the physical spaces such as classrooms, offices in which we gather with others.

It seems to me that how we show colleagues and young people that they matter relates to Roger's concept of unconditional regard (1957). By calibrating our eyes and face to the micro signals in the eyes and face of each individual, beaming our generative attention we can demonstrate that we value each individual, their experience, their character without judgement. Whilst it took me a long while to learn this, I know that particularly with vulnerable young people, I was able to establish and maintain safe, boundaried spaces whilst communicating to each individual that they mattered. It is demanding and exhausting but the child knows instantly whether they are valued or not by another. I can recall a few adults from my childhood who showed me unconditional positive regard. Crafting places which show others they matter is about relationships based on respect and in which inquiry and creativity are cultivated (Fine, 2018).

With regards to the physical space, Kline's component of place resonates with Wenger's communities of practice (1998). As educators, we need to craft spaces and provide access to resources in which young people can engage in relevant and meaningful activities, engage in 'learning trajectories they can identify with' rather than predetermined flightpaths and 'participate in actions, discussions and reflections that make a difference to the communities that they value' (1998: 10). I would argue that the same is true for educators. Structuring professional learning opportunities and meetings which are truly participatory experiences for educators, furnished in a way which shows they are welcome and that the precious time about to be spent together has been thought about and planned for (comfortable seating, refreshments, artwork or flowers, colourful stationery).

In their research entitled 'Doing school differently' in alternative provision schools in Australia, despite the neoliberal context working against them, Bills & Howard learned that headteachers wanted to make their schools 'places of connectedness' for young people. This meant a school culture characterised by relational group learning, more equal power relations between educators and young people, students involved in decision making, relationships of compassion, care and empathy and welcoming culturally and socio-economically diverse young people (Bills & Howard, 2016).

I do understand how the high expectations, silence in corridors, strict routines, not indulging a victim mentality, scripted lesson plans culture can be seductive to educators, parents and children. It is a model which says, 'I know best'. You don't have to work it all out for yourself. You simply need to comply. It simplifies the complexities of the world. Having worked in one school like this I found it in many ways a welcome antidote to the 'what can

you expect from these kids?' culture of some previous schools I had worked in. However, equity cannot be found in either of these polarised models.

I share Fielding's vision of schools as person-centred learning communities. In these places, the focus is on the whole person, the development of the self with others, through dialogue. Rather than being removed from the local context, schools exist to nurture and build community. In these places, the teacher is 'an educator of persons' and success is about moral and interpersonal development as well as qualifications. In these places, with common spaces that are brave, exploratory, vibrant in their willingness to challenge, laugh, listen, risk adventure affirming a shared humanity' (2007: 403).

Conclusion

Whilst not exhaustive, structuring my literature review using Kline's ten components has enabled me to think differently and reflect more deeply about the concept of equity as set out in my working definition and how it might or might not be achieved. I am fully aware that conducting my research will require a keen sense of humility and a pragmatic yet hopeful sense of what I can change and what I cannot.

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