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Developing Capabilities and the Management of Trust:  
Where Administration Went Wrong.

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Educational administration has a disreputable history. Originating in the early twentieth century from the coalescence of the Municipal Reform Movement, The Cult of Professionalism and Scientific Management (Bates, 1983) it has, from the beginning, been concerned with efficiency, accountability and control. Despite the attempts of Dewey, Kilpatrick and Counts to shape a commitment to education that rested on the values of community, democracy and social progress, educational administration continued its pursuit of a value free science of management throughout the century. Despite damning criticisms such as Ray Callahan's *Cult of Efficiency* (1962) and Arthur Wise's *Legislated Learning* (1979) the pursuit of a science of educational administration continued unhindered by any educational, social or ethical concerns. Despite the attempts of Greenfield (1975), Foster (1986) and others (Bates, 1983, 1987) to redefine educational administration as a normative and cultural process concerned with the management of knowledge, culture and life chances, mainstream educational administration (Boyan, 1988) ignored both criticisms and opportunities. At the end of the century, as at the beginning, administration in education, as elsewhere was concerned with performativity (Ball, 1994). Olssen, Codd and O'Neill (2004) catch the tenor of the times in their account of how schools

...became increasingly preoccupied with recording and reporting. Efficiency not only had to be done, but it had to be seen to be done. Efficiency was to be continually demonstrated through the incessant production of records and reports. Educational cost accounting became the order of the day. Teachers were required to keep records, accounting for every hour and every day of the week. Administrators were forever occupied in writing reports and policy statements. Needless to say, there was less and less time for teaching, and schools became places of tedium, ritualistic order and bland routine. Ironically, they became less and less efficient in an educational sense...The cult of efficiency had become the cult of managerialism...  
(p191)

In its contemporary form such managerialism has replaced the mantra of 'efficiency' with that of 'quality'.

Quality has become a powerful new metaphor for new forms of managerial control. Thus, in the pursuit of quality, educational institutions must engage in 'objective setting', 'planning', 'reviewing', 'internal monitoring' and 'external reporting'. Policy formation and operational activities must be clearly separated. Governance, management and operations are all distinct functions assigned to different roles. The quality of education is reduced to key performance indicators, each of which can be measured and reported.

(Olssen, Codd and O'Neill, 2004: 191)

If, at the beginning of the twentieth century the separation of conception from execution was a pillar of FW Taylor's (1911) scientific management designed to extract the maximum amount of production from even the stupidest worker,

at the end of the century neo-liberal management was designed to shackle the normative and potentially subversive interests and enthusiasms of service workers (including those that used to be called professionals) in order to guarantee the standardised performance of allocated tasks.

Neoliberal policy strategies are founded upon a conception of the person that is self-serving, competitive, and likely to be dishonest. It is a conception that underpins proposals to separate policy formation and advice from policy implementation, or the separation of funder from provider. In this, while neoliberalism values efficiency, effectiveness and control, it devalues interpersonal trust.

(Olssen, Codd and O'Neill, 2004:192)

Indeed, the devaluing of personal and institutional trust is seen by many to be characteristic of contemporary society. As Onora O'Neill (2002) suggests

...trusting often seems hard and risky. Every day we read of untrustworthy action by politicians and officials, by hospitals and exam boards, by companies and schools. We supposedly face a deepening crisis of trust. Every day we also read of aspirations and attempts to make business and professionals, public servants and politicians more accountable in more ways to more stakeholders. But can a revolution in accountability remedy our 'crisis of trust'?

(O'Neill, 2002:4)

O'Neill's answer is a pretty clear 'No'. The answer is 'No' because of what seems to be a built in paradox. Accountability procedures are designed to increase not only efficiency but also reliability; to eliminate unnecessary expense but guarantee performance.

The diagnosis of a crisis of trust may be obscure: we are not sure whether there is a crisis of trust. But we are all agreed about the remedy. It lies in prevention and sanctions. Government, institutions and professionals should be made more accountable. And in the last two decades, the quest for greater accountability has penetrated all our lives, like great draughts of Heineken, reaching parts that supposedly less developed forms of accountability did not reach.

(O'Neill, 2004:45)

Inevitably, such accountability involves greater regulation and greater intrusion into the activities of institutions, agencies and individuals.

For those of us in the public sector the new accountability takes the form of detailed control. An unending stream of new legislation and regulation, memoranda and instructions, guidance and advice floods into public sector institutions....Central planning may have failed in the Soviet Union but it is alive and well in Britain today. *The new accountability culture aims at ever more perfect administrative control of institutional and professional life.*

(O'Neill, 2002:46 italics added)

Ostensibly this ever more perfect control is designed to make institutions, firms and professionals more transparent and directly accountable for their actions: to provide guarantees of service to the public. One problem however is that the multiplication of agencies and accountabilities produces precisely the distractions and confusions that Callahan and Wise described. Indeed, as Wise (1979) suggested such multiplication of what may be individually defensible but are, in practice, often mutually contradictory accountabilities produces a 'hyper-rationalisation' which confuses and overburdens institutions and individuals alike. We are repeating the mistakes that history should have taught us to avoid.

But this is only one of the paradoxes. The other is that while such accountability is presented as increasing accountability of institutions and individuals *to the public*, in reality it does no such thing.

*In theory* the new culture of accountability and audit makes professionals and institutions more accountable *to the public*. This is supposedly done by publishing targets and levels of attainment in league tables, and by establishing complaint procedures by which members of the public can seek redress for any professional or institutional failures. But underlying this ostensible aim of accountability *to the public* the real requirements are for accountability *to regulators, to departments of government, to funders, to legal standards.*

(O'Neill, 2002:52-3)

But regulators, departments of government, funders and legislative authorities are themselves institutions in which the public has limited trust. Who guards the guardians is not a question with an obvious answer.

Even were there some straightforward way to make institutions accountable to the public another problem presents itself. There is not in fact one public but many. The notion of the 'public sphere' is subject to quite considerable theoretical and practical (political) controversy around this issue. As McKee (2004) points out, arguments between modernists (who advocate a single public sphere so as to ensure social and cultural integrity) and post-modernists (who advocate multiple interacting public spheres so as to acknowledge social and cultural diversity) are alive and well. Here the question of 'voice' seems to be important. Who has the right to be heard? And in this question we arrive at the heart of the issue of democracy, accountability and social justice for

The issue of 'democratic inclusiveness' is not just a quantitative matter of the scale of the public sphere or the proportion of the members of a political community who may speak within it. While it is clearly a matter of stratification and boundaries (for example, openness to the propertyless, the uneducated, women or immigrants) it is also a matter of how the public sphere incorporates and recognizes the diversity of identities which people bring to it from their manifold involvements in civil society. It is a matter of whether in order to participate in such a

public sphere, for example, women must act in ways previously characteristic of men and avoid addressing certain topics defined as appropriate to the private sphere...All attempts to render a single public discourse authoritative privilege certain topics, certain forms of speech and certain speakers...

(Calhoun, 1996: 456-457 *in* McKee, 204:28)

Here, of course, we are talking about issues such as stratification and exclusion and of how the concerns of the marginalised or excluded come to be part of the public sphere. The idea of 'counterpublics' is useful here. Counterpublics are groups of similar interest within which arguments can be developed to the point that they can invade and colonise the wider public sphere. Fraser provides an example from the feminist counterpublic.

...until quite recently feminists were in the minority in thinking that domestic violence against women was a matter of common concern and thus a legitimate topic of public discourse. The great majority of people considered this issue to be a private matter between what was presumed to be a fairly small number of heterosexual couples (and perhaps the social and legal professions who were supposed to deal with them). Then, feminists formed a subaltern counterpublic from which we disseminated a view of domestic violence as a widespread systematic feature of male dominated societies. Eventually, after sustained discursive contestation, we succeeded in making it a common concern.

(Fraser, 1990:71 *in* McKee, 2004: 163)

Education, as Freire (1970) pointed out so powerfully, is intimately involved in just such a process. In one of the few contemporary analyses of the intimate (but often unacknowledged) relationship between educational administration and social justice Larson and Murthada argue that

[While]...Freire's treatise on educating oppressed populations had been used widely in curriculum theory... leadership theorists have largely overlooked it. Nevertheless, Freire's arguments are as relevant to leadership as they are to teaching and learning.

(2002:146)

In particular, Freire's analysis suggests that

... many well-intentioned leaders maintain institutionalised inequity because they are committed to hierarchical logics that not only fail to question established norms but keep impoverished citizens out of decision making.

(Larson & Murtadha 2002:146. See also Larson & Ovando, 2001)

The consequence is that

Because poor and minority populations have learned to mistrust many public leaders, well-intentioned school leaders often have difficulty in earning their trust and cooperation. Friere explains that the lack of trust poor communities show to those who lead public institutions can be interpreted as an 'inherent defect' in poor people, 'evidence of their intrinsic deficiency'. Since leaders need the cooperation of those they lead, educators can be tempted to resort to many of the same hierarchical and controlling practices used by dominant elites to oppress those they lead.

(Larson & Murtadha, 2002:147)

But such a withdrawal into a coercive form of leadership is not the only option for, as Freire argues

The role of leaders is to consider seriously the reasons for mistrust on the part of oppressed populations, and to seek out true avenues of communion... helping the people to help themselves critically perceive the reality which oppresses them.

(Freire, 1970:163 in Larson and Murtadha, 2002:147)

And indeed there seem to be plenty of oppressed people around for, as Amartya Sen suggests, we

...live in a world with remarkable deprivation, destitution and oppression. There are many new problems as well as old ones, including the persistence of poverty and unfulfilled elementary needs, occurrence of famines and widespread hunger, violation of elementary political freedoms as well as of basic liberties, extensive areas of neglect of the interests and agency of women, and worsening threats to our environment and to the sustainability of our economic and social lives. Many of these deprivations can be observed, in one form or another, in rich countries as well as poor ones.

(Sen, 1999:xi)

Sen's response to this situation is to insist on the intimate connection between individual agency (freedom) and social commitment.

...individual agency is, ultimately, central to addressing these deprivations. On the other hand, the freedom of agency that we individually have is inescapably qualified and constrained by the social, political and economic opportunities that are available to us. There is a deep complementarity between individual agency and social arrangements. It is important to give simultaneous recognition to the centrality of individual freedom *and* to the force of social influences on the extent and reach of individual freedom. To counter the problems

that we face, we have to see individual freedom as a social commitment.

(Sen, 1999:xi-xii)

Social justice is then, in Sen's view, a matter of arranging our social commitments in ways that enhance individual freedom to live a valued life.

...in analysing social justice, there is a strong case for judging individual advantage in terms of the capabilities that a person has, that is, the substantive freedoms he or she enjoys to lead the kind of life that he or she has reason to value.

(Sen, 1999:87)

Capabilities, and the enhancement of individual capabilities through social arrangements, are at the heart of the issue of social justice. Sen, offers five 'types of freedom' or capabilities as being fundamental:

These include (1) political freedoms, (2) economic facilities, (3) social opportunities, (4) transparency guarantees and (5) protective security.

(Sen, 1999:10)

Such capabilities are mutually supportive and both ends and means of individual and social development.

But while Sen gives a general outline (1999:38-40) and provides considerable empirical data in support of his analysis he declines to give a specific content to these capabilities.

This is a point of criticism by Nussbaum (2000, 2003) who argues that while

...I endorse these arguments...I think that they do not take us very far in thinking about social justice. They give us a general sense of what societies ought to be striving to achieve, but because of Sen's reluctance to make commitments about substance (which capabilities a society ought most centrally to pursue), even that guidance remains but an outline. And they give us no sense of what a minimum level of capability for a just society might be.

(Nussbaum, 2003:35)

Nussbaum's solution is to give specific content to the capabilities advocated by Sen.

...the capabilities approach will supply definite and useful guidance...only if we formulate a definite list of the most central capabilities, even one that is tentative and revisable, using capabilities

so defined to elaborate a partial account of social justice, a set of basic entitlements without which no society can lay claim to justice.  
(Nussbaum, 2003:36)

Moreover:

These ten capabilities are supposed to be general goals that can be further specified by the society in question, as it works on the account of fundamental entitlements it wishes to endorse (Nussbaum 2000, Ch 1). But in some form all are part of a minimum account of social justice: a society that does not guarantee these to all its citizens, at some appropriate threshold level, falls short of being a fully just society, whatever its level of opulence. Moreover, the capabilities are held to be important for each and every person: each person is treated as an end, and none as a mere adjunct or means to the ends of others.

(Nussbaum, 2003:40)

Nussbaum's list of Central Human Functional Capabilities is: 1) Life, 2) Bodily Health, 3) Bodily Integrity, 4) Senses, Imagination and Thought, 5) Emotions, 6) Practical Reason, 7) Affiliation, 8) Other Species, 9) Play and 10) Control over One's Environment (for Nussbaum's outline of these capabilities see Appendix 1). Of these capabilities two are of particular importance.

...Practical Reason and Affiliation stand out as of special importance, since they both organize and suffuse all others, making their pursuit truly human. To take just one example, work, to be a truly human mode of functioning, must involve the availability of both practical reason and affiliation. It must involve being able to behave as a thinking being, not just a cog in a machine; and it must be capable of being done with and towards others in a way that involves mutual recognition of humanity.

(Nussbaum, 2000:82)

Whether one accepts Sen's broad definitions of capabilities or Nussbaum's elaborated list, the connection between capabilities – seen as the facilitating factors that allow individuals to live the kind of life they have reason to value – and the notion of social justice is clear.

What is not immediately clear is how responsibility for the development of such capabilities can be allocated. Individuals must bear some of the responsibility, but so must institutions. Nussbaum argues that

One question that must certainly be confronted is the question of how to allocate the duties of promoting the capabilities, in a world that contains nations, economic agreements and agencies, other international agreements and agencies, corporations and individual people. To say that "we all" have the duties is all very well, and true. But it would be good if we could go further, saying at least something

about the proper allocation of duties between individuals and institutions, and among institutions of various kinds.

(Nussbaum, 2002: 19)

Moreover, as institutions have capacities that individuals do not have, they must also take more responsibility for the support and development of capabilities.

...it is possible to argue cogently that institutions have both cognitive and causal powers that individuals do not have, powers that are pertinent to the allocation of responsibility. ...[N]ations and corporations have powers of prediction and foresight that individuals in isolation do not have. It seems plausible that such facts give us a further reason to think of the responsibilities for promoting human capabilities as institutional.

(Nussbaum, 2002: 20)

Sen has a similar view.

Individuals live and operate in a world of institutions. Our opportunities and prospects depend crucially on what institutions exist and how they function. Not only do institutions contribute to our freedoms, their roles can be sensibly evaluated in the light of their contributions to our freedom. To see development as freedom provides a perspective in which institutional assessment can systematically occur.

(Sen, 1999:142)

Which brings us back to the issues of administration, specifically educational administration.

If the above argument holds then there is an intimate relationship between social justice (seen as the equitable promotion of human capabilities) and the administration of institutions. Institutions can be held to account for their contribution to (or denial of) social justice in terms of their contribution to the development and extension of human capabilities. This is a somewhat different and more complex notion of accountability than that (rather perverse) form outlined by O'Neill. It is also particularly apposite for the calling of education to account.

Rather than the narrow and distorting forms of accountability currently demanded through standardized tests and performance audits<sup>1</sup> the capabilities perspective demands that the role of education in promoting the full range of human capabilities be considered and acted upon. This is both a

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<sup>1</sup> For accounts of the devastating effects of such forms of accountability see McNeil, 2000 and Elliott et al, 2004)

curricular responsibility and a pedagogical one: curricular, in the sense that the drive towards fuller development of human capabilities requires a curriculum appropriately shaped towards achieving such ends in particular circumstances; pedagogical, in the sense that the circumstances that students bring to the educational context must be taken into account in the teaching relationship. Larson and Murtadha capture these requirements rather well in their description of the person education should be aiming to encourage. Such a person, they say

Should be capable of practical reason, being able to form a conception of the good life and to engage in critical reflection about planning one's life. This also means being able to recognize and live with concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction, to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities, to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that person, and to have the capacity for both justice and friendship.

(Larson and Murtadha, 2002:155)

Such accomplishments are not notably the subject of high stakes testing!

And, of course, such concerns have traditionally been excluded from the province of educational administration through the separation of departments of 'Leadership' from departments of curriculum and instruction. But surely leadership cannot be divorced from an appropriate conception of how a 'good education; is to be achieved through the mechanisms of curriculum and instruction. And a good education in terms of the above argument, must be intimately related to ideas of social justice. This being so, the whole condition of students lives is an essential consideration, not simply their academic performance.

For educational leaders, a focus on capabilities as worthy educational goals necessitates promoting a greater measure of equality than exists among most schools struggling with the legacies of racism, sexism and classism. This approach suggests that if children receive educational and material support, they can become fully capable of human action and expression. Freedom from violence, unconditional support, and concern for health and nutrition are educational considerations beyond today's hollow and entirely insufficient demands for improving academic achievement.

(Larson & Murtadha, 2002:155)

To be fair to the field of educational administration, more than one voice is currently being raised with such goals in sight. Murphy (2002) for instance argues that principals must become 'moral stewards' whose actions are 'anchored in issues such as justice, community and schools that function for all children and youth' (2002:75). Just what constitutes social justice is however, left rather open.

More powerfully Furman and Starratt (2002) link the pursuit of social justice through education with the reinvigoration of democratic community. Drawing on Apple and Beane (1995) they argue that the central concerns of democratic, socially just schools include

1. The open flow of ideas, regardless of their popularity, that enables people to be as fully informed as possible;
  2. The use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems and policies;
  3. Concern for others and the "common good";
  4. Concern for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities
- (Furman and Starratt, 2002:106)

Starratt works this thesis out more fully in his recent book (2003), concluding that educational administrators have a vastly more responsible role than that allocated to them by functionalist accounts of educational administration that limit them to the management of efficiency, accountability, performance and control. For Starratt educational administrators

... are called upon to assume the role of citizens taking responsibility to work together to make our world a better place: more human, more just, more civil, and more in harmony with our natural environment. In other words, we are accountable to both our ancestors who struggled to create the world we live in and to our progeny who must live with the public choices we collectively make. Thus, our accountability is not simply a legal concern, not simply an academic concern, not, indeed, simply a social concern to protect children. Our accountability is also a moral concern to bring the work of learning to bear on our collective responsibilities.

(Starratt, 2003: 228-229)

Bringing the work of learning to bear on our collective responsibilities is surely the pre-eminent task of educators and educational administrators. Seen within the context of a capabilities approach, such a charge might go far to redress the damage done by decades of educational administration informed by a woefully inadequate understanding of both education and administration and of their necessary links to the pursuit of social justice.

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## APPENDIX !

### The Central Human Capabilities

1. **Life.** Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. **Bodily Health.** Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3. **Bodily Integrity.** Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
4. **Senses, Imagination, and Thought.** Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain.
5. **Emotions.** Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)
6. **Practical Reason.** Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)
7. **Affiliation.**
  - A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)
  - B. Having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.
8. **Other Species.** Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9. **Play.** Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
10. **Control Over One's Environment.**
  - A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association.
  - B. Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason, and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

(From Nussbaum, 2003: 41-42)