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Educating narrative and sociological imagination in times of uncertainty

"We who are teachers have to accommodate ourselves to lives as clerks or functionaries if we did not have in mind a quest for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we live in" (Greene, M., 1995, p.1).

The talk will begin with remarks about the nature of political and economic uncertainties we face. It will ask what is revealed and what remains hidden when we frame the future in terms of uncertainty. This will be followed by the observation that the influence of neoliberal globalisation on education has generally led to a disproportionate emphasis on certain types of imaginations (those that privilege instrumental interests of reason) and have marginalised other forms of imagination (those that nurture critical and caring outlook). This has led to the calls for a deeper and active integration of imagination in educational theory and practice (Nussbaum, Egan, Greene, Bailey, Eisner among others). Drawing upon Martha Nussbaum (1997) and C. W. Mills (1959), the presentation will make a case for narrative and sociological imagination as educational goals. Narrative imagination is the ability to be an intelligent reader of another person's story (Nussbaum, p. 11) and sociological imagination is the capacity 'to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within a society' (Mills, p. 5). Nurturing these imaginations become increasingly important in a world that defies linearity and is more and more interconnected and vulnerable to the abuse of power. Overall, the talk is concerned with our expectations from education today and tomorrow. For a long time, the expectation was to create a population with functional or advanced literacy and numeracy skills. This is no longer sufficient. Education must now help nurture a caring attitude, a capacity to critique and energy to create, the three Cs of education. A fertile imagination underpins these capabilities.