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EPILOGUE

The interrelation of twenty-first-century education and work from a gender perspective

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This paper analyses the interrelation of twenty-first-century education and work from a gender perspective. The analysis is carried out theoretically by asking whether human capital theory and Bourdieu's reproduction theory are adequate instruments for such an endeavour. It is argued that the explanatory power of the human capital concept of the interrelation between education and work is extremely weak, because the human capital concept conceals costs necessary to create human capital. In contrast, reproduction theory comprehends investments in education through reproductive work. But, reproduction theory fails short to explain ongoing gender hierarchies within employment. Therefore, analysis of social and societal structure needs to go beyond the focus on education and work to explain the maintenance of gender hierarchies.

Keywords: education; work; gender

In conclusion to this special issue, this epilogue considers a feature that is present in all the papers and that is the mode of economy. It does so by addressing the interrelation between education and work for women and men in current capitalist societies. The aim is to find a way to grasp the complex relations between 'gender' and 'education' and 'capitalism'. The epilogue applies a theoretical perspective as a counterweight to the empirically oriented papers.

By 'education' I refer mainly to formal education taking place in institutions, although, as I will show later, the analysis of formal education cannot be separated from informal education carried out mainly by mothers supporting their children in their schooling. Nevertheless, 'education' here is distinguished from 'socialisation'.

The use of the notion of 'work' in this text implies all sorts of work ranging from reproductive work such as caring for children, sick and elderly people, as well as community work, in addition to productive work carried out by most people in employment positions. It includes self-employment

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and the growing service sector where productive work, such as administration, counselling, coordination, takes place. The epilogue focuses on paid employed work as productive work and on unpaid work mostly done at homes as reproductive work. The reproductive dimension of work is often left out in studies that claim to deal with 'education and work' (e.g. Müller & Gangl, 2003; Raffe, 2003; Teichler, 1999) despite the extensive feminist literature on this topic.

So, what does it mean if one includes reproductive work into the analysis of the interrelation between education and work? Without being able to provide an elaborated concept of this interrelationship here, I wish to point to some basic dimensions that are often missed in studies, which do not incorporate reproductive work. First of all, one gains sight of gender relations in education and in work and in the interrelation of both. This is due to ongoing gender division of work and labour in contemporary societies. In capitalist societies, productive and reproductive work is closely entangled. Therefore, an equal distribution of reproductive work between women and men would also mean a greater equality in productive work among the genders (Ferber & Nelson, 2003; Hughes, 2002; Kuhn & Wolpe, 2013).

Secondly, incorporating reproductive work into the analysis of the interrelation of education and work provides an insight into the rarely addressed circumstances such as education as an ambivalent area in terms of both freeing up the work force by taking care of children during various hours on *work*days and of binding the work force – women especially – to carry out roles, including responsibility for regular school attendance and homework. It is by taking into account the reproductive part of work and hidden social conditions that constitute the interrelation of education and work that enables a much more comprehensive societal analysis.

There are four modes of interrelations between education and work that can be identified: education as a feeder to work; education as an area of employment; education as a replacement of employment; and education as both setting free and binding the work force.

The most commonly dealt with relation between education and work falls under the first mode where education is conceptualised as a feeder for work: Education provides people with skills and abilities to produce goods and services; education provides people with dispositions to produce goods and services under capitalist conditions; and education provides people with degrees and titles that are used in employment for the distribution of jobs and positions. In all three ways, the main direction of flow is from education to work, but there is also a flow in the other direction, from work to education. It is this latter flow I am going to focus on in the human capital concept and in Bourdieu's reproduction theory. It will become clear that the human capital concept excludes large parts of work as constituent of education whereas the reproduction theory includes work as a prerequisite and component of education. But the reproductive theory cannot explain

women's success in education and ongoing disadvantages in employment with its focus on education as the location for the maintenance of social inequalities. I argue that we need to look beyond the interrelation of education and work to understand ongoing gender hierarchies. With this I aim to broaden research on social and societal structure.

Human capital

The core assertion of the concept of human capital is that investment in education increases future monetary income of people (Becker, 1975). Human capital theory operates within the neoclassical market model which premises conditions of perfect competition and remuneration of factors of production following their margin productivity. It becomes immediately obvious that the concept of human capital demonstrates a highly distorted conception of empirical reality, which could serve and indeed is used as an ideology (European Commission, 2012; OECD, 2007). A perfect competition would presume equal individuals in regard to characteristics being crucial for competition such as equal time and mobility for employment. The unequal division of labour among women and men as it is practised in current societies includes an unequal share of time and mobility as an unequal distribution of many other goods and burdens as well. Thus, current societies are far away from perfect competition.

The same is true for a remuneration of factors of production following their margin productivity. Such a remuneration would premise one single objective: increase in productivity. Other aspects such as quality of the product, demand for the product, markets and their conditions to sell the product are left out. In addition, such remuneration would exclude any other factors that might influence remuneration as well such as power relations between the ones who pay and the ones who are paid. Power relations of such a kind are indeed excluded by the concept of human capital as this concept abolishes the difference between labour and capital by conceptualising all people as capitalists through their capitalised work force (Krais, 1983). I will come back to this later.

So far, the concept of human capital presents itself somehow as a linear model: investment in education leads to higher productivity leading to higher remuneration. But in fact, it is a model that relies on interrelation between education and work, although not explicitly, because the investment in education stems from work, from both, reproductive and productive work. Otherwise, simply there would be no children going to school with books and laptops being used in classes among various other materials. This work, which is a precondition of education taking place, is concealed by the concept of human capital, together with its costs. Additionally, the concept of human capital with its assertion that investment in education leads to future monetary income relies on two further presumptions: first, schooling

causes productivity and secondly, wages are a measure of productivity. In regard to the first presumption, it remains a black box what 'productivity' exactly *is*. Generally, by 'productivity' people refer to an output measured in units of its input. When we talk about material products this might roughly be calculable, although even there we would have difficulties in summing the amount of work force exactly as working time is only one among other factors and reproductive work is always needed for the re-disposition of work force and generally excluded from any calculation of productivity. But how could 'productivity' be measured in the increasing service sector such as care of elderly, counselling or management? In fact, productivity is highly culturally conceptualised and impacted as well as its remuneration; we just need to think of the 'gender' of occupations I will refer to later. This leads directly to the second presumption that wages are a measure of productivity. But one only needs to visualise wages for midwives, an occupation at the foundation of productivity, to doubt empirical basis for this presumption. The discussion on female work capacity has revealed that especially areas in which this is accessed, jobs are paid lower (Kupfer & Ranftl, 2006). In addition to empirical objections, in conceptional terms, if wages would be purely a measure of productivity, this would presume a world in which no one lives from other people's work and/or income. As we know, this is not the case at all. Following Folbre (2009), Becker (1981) realised that he needed a theory of the family (rather than individual decision-making), but he treated the family as an individual, by presuming altruism within families ensuring every member of a family cares for the welfare of all others. According to Folbre, 'Becker never examines the contractual asymmetries criticised by feminists since the mid-nineteenth century – legal provisions that accord more legal authority and control over household resources to husbands than to wives' (Folbre, 2009, p. 300).

Concluding the discussion of the human capital concept, I want to summarise its outcomes and consequences. Firstly, the concept of human capital deflects attention from the costs necessary to create human capital. Thus, this model conveys the appearance that people are equal: all are capitalists, the division between capital and labour is concealed. This leads to the impression that it is the market that creates inequalities, mainly in terms of unequal incomes. And this kind of inequality – as Folbre points out – seems to be fair, because wages differ, following the human capital story, only by education and by experience. Her ironic critique deserves a quote:

> 'Becker's very confidence in choice helps justify gender inequalities. Women are paid less than men because they choose jobs that pay less. Mothers take more responsibility for family care than fathers because they enjoy doing so. Spending on children, like on pets, is merely a form of discretionary spending. If people choose to have children, they should pay the costs of rearing and educating them. If work is provided for free, why count its contribution as part of GDP?'. (Folbre, 2009, p. 300)

Studies that sought for empirical evidences of lower women's salaries compared to men's because of women's selections of jobs with higher non-pecuniary rewards (such as intrinsically satisfaction or mother-friendly work conditions) failed to find such evidences (for an overview see England & Folbre, 2005, p. 635).[1] Instead, empirical evidences show (see for an overview over studies again England & Folbre, 2005, p. 635) that jobs are paid less when done by women and that the same jobs are paid more when done by men, which means that the gender wage pay gap could be explained simply by a devaluation of women.

As demonstrated, the explanatory power of the human capital concept of the interrelation between education and work is extremely weak. However, it shall not be concealed that there are many studies that demonstrate a relationship between a degree of education and income (for an overview see Rubinson & Browne, 1994). Nevertheless, it is often not clear *what* relationship these findings indicate exactly as they do not reveal the increased productivity due to education nor the amount of income earned due to productivity. Rubinson and Browne (1994) therefore concluded that the critique on the concept of human capital does not necessarily imply the negation of a relation between degree of education and degree of income. Despite this lack of clarity 'human-capital theory comes to *constitute* the taken-for-granted beliefs about the way society works' (p. 585, emphasis in original). Research on the modes and ways this happened and how this still is practised is therefore needed in times in which the concept of human capital is still very powerful in political terms.

Reproduction theory

Dillabough has provided an overview on reproduction theory and its position within feminist theories (2007) and within larger debates on gender and education (2003). However, what seems to be missing is a close reading of the theoretical concept of the interrelation of education and work within the reproductive framework.

In their text 'Formal Qualifications and Occupational Hierarchies: the Relationship Between the Production System and the Reproduction System', Bourdieu and Boltanski (1977) state that the education system produces the workforce in two ways: by teaching skills, which they call technical reproduction and by 'reproducing the positions of the agents and their groups within the social structure' (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1977, p. 62), which they call social reproduction. In referring to the first, the technical reproduction, the authors consider this function as relatively weak because the education system does not hold the monopoly on the technical reproduction, as skills to be used in employment could and are in fact widely created on-the-job-training.[2] With regard to the second, social reproduction, Bourdieu and Boltanski consider this function as relatively independent of the technical

one. Both statements, the assertion that educational institutions are not the main provider of skills and the assertion that the social position of people is relatively independent from their skill are declarations that contrast sharply with the ones of human capital theory in which educational institutions are held as essential for the creation of skills and in which the social position of people are held to be highly dependent on their skills.

According to Bourdieu and Boltanski, both, this double role and the weaker first role of the education system lead to an important consequence: 'the educational system *depends less directly on the demands of the production system than on the demands of reproducing the family group*' (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1977, p. 62, emphasis in origin).[3] Here, it becomes clear, why the reproduction theory is a theory of the social structure of societies. In the following, I want to emphasise the main *gendered* parts of the social structure of societies. Firstly, societies are structured following the unequal distribution of reproductive work. This also impacts on inequality in employed, paid work, for example, along the unequal distribution of full- and part-time employment or the unequal access to jobs through mobility. Within the theoretical framework of Bourdieu and Boltanski, this gendered social inequality could not be altered by education or within the education system. Arnot concludes: 'For Bourdieu then, the reformulation of gender and sex roles would depend on changes within the sexual division of labour in the home and so, in the final instance, in the economy' (Arnot, 2002, p. 47). Secondly, societies are structured following the unequal evaluation of women and men. This is well reflected in gender segregations of occupations of which the 'male' connoted ones (e.g. pallet transporter) are evaluated and paid more than the 'female' ones (e.g. packagers) and becomes very obvious in studies of the 'gender' (change) of occupations (e.g. Davies, 1996; Tancred-Sheriff, 1989), demonstrating that the prestige and remuneration does not depend on the occupation, but from the 'gender' ascribed to the occupation. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) address this gendered social inequality in their studies on gender segregations of study subjects at universities. This finds its current reflection still in a highly gendered segregated world of vocational education and apprenticeships. I will come back to this point later. To summarise then, the technical and the social reproduction role of the education system for the workforce relativises *education's* contribution to the creation and maintenance of *gender* hierarchies as the unequal distribution of reproductive work and the unequal evaluation of women and men are not predominantly created in the education system.

So far, the reproductive concept seems to be rather linear too (as the human capital): education creates workforce. Therefore, I want to demonstrate that this is a fallacy and that in fact the reproductive concept is a theory of the *inter*relation of education and work. Similarly to my examination of the human capital concept, I will start by looking closer at investment in

education. In contrast to the human capital concept, the reproduction theory includes investment into education explicitly. Bourdieu (1972/1977, 1984) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) reveal in various studies how cultural capital is created and instilled in children. Cultural capital varies following social class and in educational institutions generally middle and upper class cultural capital is recognised as the legitimate one, leading to educational success and higher degrees. The inculcation of cultural capital predominantly takes place in families, which is where mothers care for children. A large part of reproduction work consists in the transmission of cultural capital. This is time consuming and leaves the ones providing it, mainly women, with less time disposable to employed work. Thus, in Bourdieu et al.'s reproduction theory the part of education could not be thought of independent from reproductive work as one dimension of work. The investment in education through reproductive work produces social hierarchy in terms of class and gender inequalities.

The second dimension of the interrelation of education and work, on which Bourdieu and Boltanski focus in their text, is titles. Decisive for the benefit of education in employment is the title a person receives from an educational institution (and not productivity basing on qualification as the human capital concept states). Titles are certified by law and they are certificates in the sense that they are claims of a certain occupation and a certain position in employment. Following Krais (1983), the benefit of titles is not limited to pecuniary remuneration, but includes also symbolic benefits such as recognition and status. Bourdieu and Boltanski do not differentiate between upper and lower levels of occupational positions that could be accessed with one title, so that following their concept, one title would lead to similar occupational positions. But this is not the empirical case. A large amount of studies revealed that many people who are categorised as being part of an ethnic minority and many women with degrees do not enter upper employment positions and also tend to be employed in certain areas of occupation not reflecting the wide range of jobs they would be entitled to occupy (England, 1982, for an overview see Rubinson & Browne, 1994). Krais (1983) points out that certificates presume ranking orders that structure the social area, but there is also a ranking order going on *within* a profession a title is provided for. Again, Bourdieu and Boltanski do not address this differentiation.[4] But Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984/1988; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) shows ranking orders within titles by demonstrating how university disciplines are hierarchised by class and gender. The omission of addressing the employment positions' hierarchies *independent* from titles might be due to Bourdieu's objective to explain the interrelation of education and work.[5] If titles contribute only to a certain extent to employment's hierarchies and one acknowledges that there are other factors constituting hierarchies in employment, the current success of women in education and their ongoing inferior positions in employment are not a puzzle any more.

In summary, the interrelation of education and work from the perspective of reproduction theory partly addresses gender issues explicitly and partly obliquely. Thus, compared to the human capital concept, the reproduction theory is a much more useful instrument for the analysis of empirical reality. However, it became clear that the reproduction theory too can only partly grasp the gender hierarchies.

I will now come to a brief sketch of the current situation of women in education and work and explain that a focus on education and work is not sufficient for an understanding of ongoing gender hierarchies or a comprehensive social structure analysis.

Going beyond education and work to understand contemporary gender hierarchies

Since the creation of the human capital and the reproduction theory, almost 50 years have passed and the situation of women in education and employment has changed. In several countries, more women than men achieve the highest school leaving degree; women drop out of schools less than men; and women obtain better marks and they study in higher numbers than men at universities (UNESCO, 2012). Women increased their participation rate in employment significantly: 45% in 2009 of all employees in Europe (European Commission, 2010). But women do gain still less than men. Even in similar professions, the pay gap is over 20% (Heidenreich in Abele, 2013). They also obtain much fewer senior positions, for example, in research 18% of senior positions were held by women although their share of PhDs was 45% in 2006 (European Commission, 2010). A view on top positions of the first 100 FTSE corporations (Financial Times Stock Exchange) in the UK shows that 8.5% of executive directors were women in March 2013 (Sealy & Vinnicomb, 2013). Across Europe, men account for 89% of board members among largest companies listed on the stock exchanges (European Commission, 2010). On decision-making bodies of unions at European level less than 23% were women and in employers' organisations less than 12% were women (European Commission, 2010). Also at a global level, gender hierarchies prevail and there is no country in which gender equality exists (World Economic Forum, 2013). Current changes in the traditional global distribution of graduates going from north western countries to East Asian ones with Chinese graduates overtaking the US numbers are new patterns of the old capitalist 'game', but don't indicate a change of the capitalist organisation of work or labour. Following Folbre (2012), an increased global supply of highly educated labour and current economic crisis have *exposed* (not created) the impossibilities of human capital claims. According to Krais (1983) an increase in the competition of individuals occurs when education titles become more important which is the case when symbolic and material goods and markets are closer

related – a development we are currently observing – but this positional competition does not bear a *new* dimension of the interrelation of education and work, but could well be explained within the theoretical framework of the reproduction theory. In terms of gender relations, education expansion and globalisation of production processes lead to a gain of women in education and the rise of new middle classes in the global south, both providing some pressure to white middle class men in the north, but not to an end of gender hierarchies as the numbers above have demonstrated. Even in education, a closer look reveals the continuing division of men and women into different apprenticeships and study subjects (Charles & Bradley, 2009).

Over the course of the last 50 years, many efforts have been made to change textbooks and curricula to avoid impressions of traditional gender roles (for an overview see Bank, 2007; Skelton, Francis, & Mayan, 2006). The objective was to widen the range of possibilities for occupations for girls and boys going beyond becoming mothers and housewives or male professionals (an overview is provided by Bank, 2007, Skelton et al., 2006). So, if school's teaching contents do not prepare women for taking over most of the reproductive work, explanations for the ongoing inequality in share of reproductive work between men and women beyond the interrelation of formal and institutionalised education and work are required.

In contrast to former times when children were explicitly educated following gender norms there are nowadays increasing areas in which programmes aim at motivating and recruiting students for the 'opposite' gender norm, so that girls and women shall enter technical professions and boys and men social and caring ones (Bank, 2011). These programmes have so far not lead to an equal spread of women and men in vocational and higher education, which seems to be a sign that much more fundamental and deeply embedded gender divisions internalised in socialisation and presented in social structures are at work.

Most crucially, the success of girls and women in education in terms of their marks and credits (UNESCO, 2012) as well as their overall majority of numbers in higher education in several countries (UNESCO, 2012) demonstrates that explanations of social inequality relating to the interrelation of education and work, as the human capital concept and the reproduction theory, fail to capture the whole picture of ongoing *gender* inequalities. This is an important finding for social inequality research as it questions concepts of education as positional good (Hirsch, 1976), or at least the weight given to education for the explanation of the creation and maintenance of social inequality. It seems that for the analysis of social structure and social mobility, we need to go beyond the focus on education and work and to seek other explanations for the maintenance of gender hierarchies.

Beauvoir offered an insightful analysis of the creation and maintenance of gender hierarchies 65 years ago. She argued that women submit to being defined as the Other by men defining themselves as the One (following the

newest translation: Beauvoir, 1949/1997, p. 18). Here, the decisive point is that *women are taking part* in the construction and maintenance of the gender hierarchy. According to Beauvoir, women, in contrast to other suppressed social groups such as workers or blacks, cannot unite, because they are much closer tied in *their social position* to men as fathers, brothers, husbands, sons than to other women. Additionally, the tie with which women are tied to their suppressors is not comparable to other ties: 'she is the Other in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another' (Beauvoir, 1949/1997, p. 20). Women do not tear this tie, because they need it for their existence and for their reproduction. Despite improvements in the situation of women their current status is far from being equal to men. *As long as this situation remains*, it restricts women's scope of agency and means 'To decline to be the Other, to refuse to be a party of the deal – this would be for women to renounce all the advantages conferred upon them by their alliance with the superior caste' (Beauvoir, 1949/1997, p. 21). Despite the difficulties to alter the gender hierarchy and to improve the situation of women due to strong normative devaluation of women, Beauvoir's analysis points to the *social* context as the crucial one that needs to be changed. Therefore, every action that contributes to an improvement of the social status of women, from unions' fights for secure and family maintaining employment conditions for women, over welfare state policies of a general income, to the deconstruction of gender leading to subversive practices of undermining hetero dichotomy, increases the possibility of women to decline to be the Other and to break the gender hierarchy.

Notes

1. In addition, England (1982) found from data of the US National Labour Statistics that women are NOT 'penalized less for time spent out of employment if they choose predominantly female occupations than if they choose occupations more typical for males' (England, 1982, p. 358). In light of this finding, studies on gender bias of education systems in the varieties of capitalism debate (Estébez-Abe, 2011) are put into question.
2. This assessment is shared by Collins (1979) who concludes his literature review on studies on the creation of employment skills by stating that apart from literacy most skills are taught at the workplace and not in schools.
3. In light of this assertion, the whole debate on the so called knowledge society or knowledge economy could well be analysed and would reveal how this policy and discourse contributes to the creation of social inequality.
4. Here, Collins' concept of credentialism (1979), which is in large parts very similar to the Bourdieuan perspective, could partly step in as Collins also understood companies and other employment organisations as cultural places, but focuses more than Bourdieu does on what happens inside companies and found out that employment positions and careers do not depend on skills, but on 'manoeuvring to reach the sequence of positions that lead upward' (Collins, 1979, p. 30). Here, personal sponsorship is the prevailing pattern. Collins' focus on the inner processes of employment lead him to the assertion that

social inequality is less occurring along class divisions, 'but (a) the segregation between higher-paying male occupations; and (b) admission into full-time and relatively secure jobs within the urban labor force' (Collins, 1979, p. 185). Thus, following Collins, and here Bourdieu would agree, the design of employment positions is the product of power relations.

5. One could find a parallel to the human capital concept in this omission.

Notes on contributor

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