

# Aligning/contrasting pedagogy and populism as a support for democratic education

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# Presentation overview

The Politics of populism



The Politics of democracy

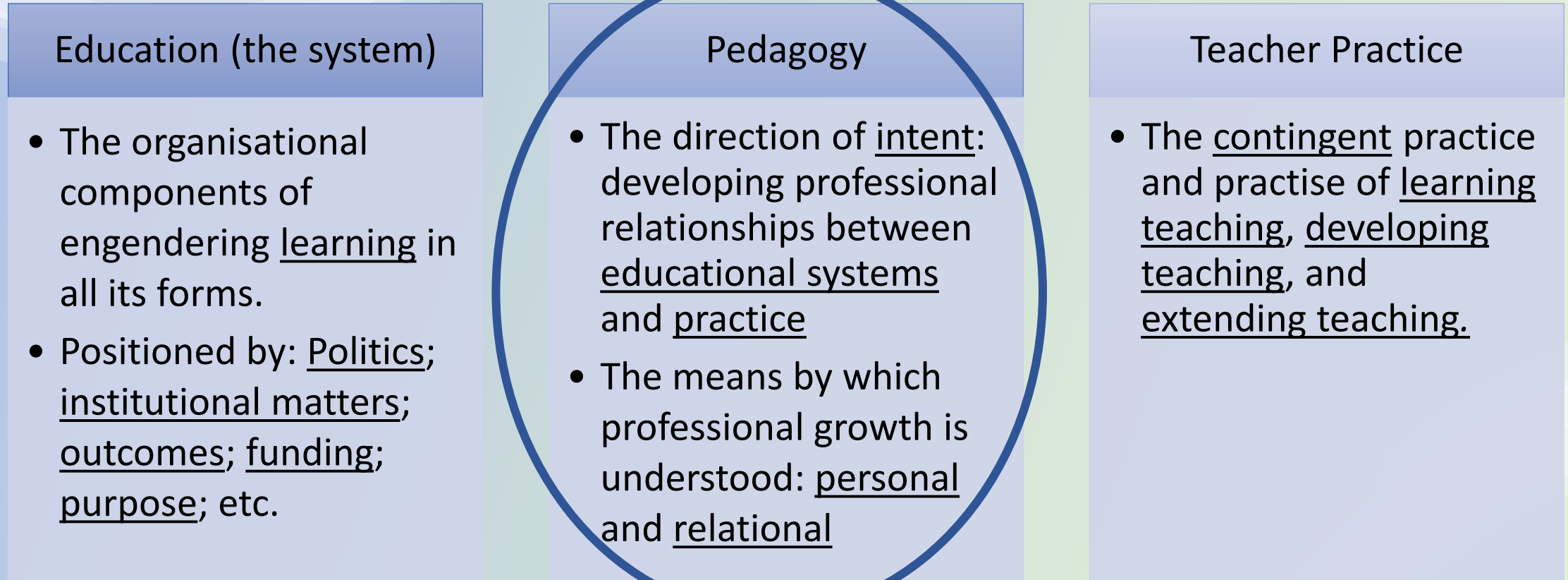


The problem with pedagogy



Conclusion

# Education Systems to Practice: Pedagogy as Mindfulness (Adams, 2011)



# Populism

- Long and varied history
- Left- and right-wing variants
- Inextricably linked to democracy and shifts from the periphery
- Relies on myths and '(re)representation' of 'truth'
  - Central here is difference: to increase participation or note existential threats
- Various built around twin-axes of 'elites' and 'the people'
- Utilises 'common-sense' as the prevailing doctrine
- Knowledge is thus implicated: 'versions of the truth'

# Populism: the inevitable end for capitalism?

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- Capitalism (as defined economically and in terms of power) cannot sustain infinite growth with finite resources
- The tenets of capitalism require all to prefer a stratified society
- For elites to maintain power, there must be an 'Other' at the feet of whom, problems can be laid
  - However, populists maintain they are not the elite!
- Capitalism 'knows' things others cannot.
- Capitalism leads to increasing inequalities and thus, education as the means for the individual to gain some certainty in an uncertain world





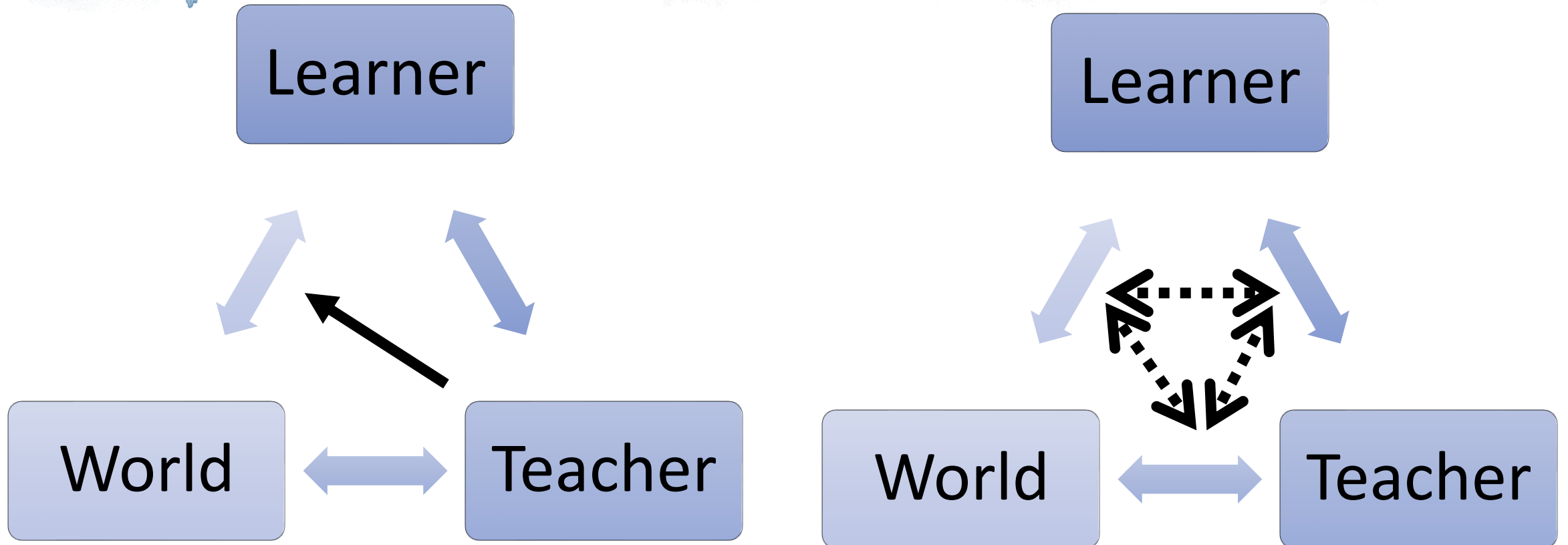
Populism ‘...raises essential questions about not only the durability and elasticity of liberal, representative democracy and civic engagement, but also *how* people learn to live with this contemporary antagonism and, importantly, with and for each other.

(Robbins and Bishop, 2-19: iii *emphasis in original*)

# Democracy

- **Performative democracy:**
  - Technical aspects that offer seemingly offer choice (one person; one vote)
  - Mechanistic elements take centre stage (voter fraud for example)
- **Existential democracy:**
  - Human dignity and worth central to decision-making (the centrality of human-ness)

Pedagogy: 'Being in and acting on the world with and for others'





# The narratives of democratic and populist pedagogy?

<b>Democratic narratives</b>		<b>Populist narratives</b>
World as both beautiful and cruel	<i>Ontology</i>	World as cruel and unfair
Co-constructed	<i>Epistemology</i>	Great canons
The bringer of hope	<i>The teacher</i>	Inherently lazy and wasteful
Thoughtful, community focused	<i>The learner</i>	Unformed, selfish
Locally sourced and developed	<i>Curriculum</i>	Body of knowledge
Supportive of development	<i>Education</i>	Privileging
Revealing of the world	<i>Teaching</i>	Transfer from have, to have not
Positioned, relational, and open to critique	<i>Learning</i>	Acquisition of accepted wisdom, not open to critique
Journeys into shared, positioned understanding	<i>Assessment</i>	Rigorous testing against standards

# Populism, democracy, and pedagogy

- Populism and democracy: agonistic democracy ‘is based on the ontological proposition that social identities and practices (at any scale) are radically contingent, only secured through the precarious exclusion of other possibilities’ (Petrie et al., 2019: 491).
  - Politics ‘as normal’ to identify the ‘acceptable Other/alternative’.
- For Gough (2012: 46) this ‘...invites us to understand our physical and social worlds as open, recursive, organic, nonlinear and emergent...’.
- Pedagogy, then, is ‘...not just ‘being in a relationship with a child’– it is also insisting on keeping alive the discussion of what counts as valuable and desirable, even if at times such judgements may seem obvious and self-evident (or perhaps particularly when this is the case)’ (Klitmøller, 2018: 846).

# (Democratic?) Pedagogy and populism...

## More about?

Why things are said

The context in which things are said

Realisation, appreciation, and challenge  
of positioned selves, *in relation*

## Less about?

What is said

Relationship 'with and to the truth'

Affirmation/rupture of self

# Conclusion

- Populism in education, seemingly gives ‘...voice to the ordinary teacher’ (Watson, 2021: 299)
  - Populism at a micro-level.
- Hence, pedagogy as a site for democratic contest.
- ‘Place-based’ solutions, but caution should prevail: no desire to set one ‘site’ against another
- Populism, ‘...as a form of political articulation, has something substantial to offer a democratic conception of education.’ (Mårdh and Tryggvason, 2017: 602)
- Populism is not an *either-or*, rather it forms via gradations (Mårdh and Tryggvason, 2017)
- Populism provides a space where 'the people' affectively articulate 'themselves' through shared recognition. Such recognition is never closed but is, rather, a communicative process of re-articulation: the boundaries of 'the people' are constantly drawn and redrawn (after Mårdh and Tryggvason, 2017)