SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS
OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract:

Education is a dynamic social process with its two main components: teaching and learning. As a field of study in social sciences education science / pedagogy has a truly interdisciplinary basis. In this article we will discuss socio-psychological aspects of teaching and learning. As human beings we are all social actors: educational managers, teachers, students, parents, etc. All people have their own social responsibilities and tasks in educational activities. When we analyze and understand comprehensively this social reality it will be much more successful to establish effective strategies and apply them in society. Of course, as individuals, social groups and societies we are facing psychological interactions as well. These are very connected to people's being social actors. This is why it is more proper to take a "socio-psychological" level of analysis for profoundly understanding educational processes. In this scientific discussion we will refer to Marx's concepts related to education, theories in sociology of education and educational psychology. Our academic purpose is contributing to the progressive literature in education studies as broadening the discussion.

Keywords: education science, sociology of education, educational psychology, learning, teaching

1. Introduction

Education is one of the core social institutions through which societies are existing. Education contributes to all societies in several directions regardless of what is the socio-economic or socio-political orientation of particular society: social values and skills required for continuity of society are taught though education; individuals become citizens and learn the way how they can contribute positively to their societies; it is a universal way of progress for men and women, social groups and nations. Therefore, education is a multilayered and multidirectional issue. It cannot be limited just into the academic frontiers of pedagogy.

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There is sufficient empirical evident to say that humanity is progressing. Science and philosophy prove that people are more capable to cope with difficulties, disasters and harms they are facing. In global age each nation has the possibility of benefitting from universal sources of knowledge and data available internationally and meantime maintaining their local, specific ways for serving in national level. This interactional process is working also in the field of educational studies.

Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, the rise of nations and socialism are huge steps of humanity. Each opened new gates and possibilities for the World. Today we have a great literature on experiences of centuries, about people's responses to challenges of history and nature, on theoretical discussions of modern and contemporary societies. According to the teaching of Marx and Engels, "*the essence of the historical development of human society has been so far the progressive dialectical unfolding and perfection of the productive forces*" (Marx, 2016, p.3169). The "*productive forces*" are, of course, still unfolding and being perfected: from biology to chemistry, from economics to nanotechnology in every field of human knowledge and sciences every day we see numerous progresses which make international solidarity and brotherhood strong realities rather than just beautiful ideals. Global peace, communication, mass media and social media create the possibility for this interaction. However, what is contributing most to this success and achievements is education. Scientific researches, technological developments and all improvements are possible thanks to education. Knowledge, skills, values and wisdom can be transmitted to social actors, to all individuals as citizens, only through education.

Education is a very dynamic and wide social phenomenon. In this article we will limit ourselves with socio-psychological aspects of teaching and learning mostly. Even this topic is broad enough, but this is an ongoing discussion. We will focus on methodological aspects and critical theoretical position on this subject. Doing something and theorizing something are related but different. In our social scientific discussion, it is always better to remember that social praxis is determining definitively. This is why every theory and strategy are tested by practice in reality. Our discussions here need to be considered as some contributions to educational issues which has to be solved in social struggles and practices.

2. Conceptualizing education: Literature review, methodological approaches and critical discussions

Critical origins of concepts on education can be found in Karl Marx's social theory and other theories of social sciences as well. According to the conception of Karl Marx "*the relationship between schools and capitalist production*" is a requirement in capitalism. However, this has "*multiple layers and processes*", some of them "*operate in contradiction to the simple reproduction of capitalism.*" In capitalist societies "*schools reproduce the socioeconomic inequalities*" continuously "*from the level of education policy on down into the ways knowledge is constructed and communicated in the classroom (…) However, it is important to understand that schools do more than reproduce capitalist inequalities; they also do ideological work to justify the existence of those same inequalities*" (Au, 2018, p.76-77). Although

education in capitalist societies reproduce the class inequalities, they are also providing a basis for further political imaginations beyond capitalism, i.e. socialism.

In 20th Century and today in 21st Century it is realized that "*Karl Marx is an important educational thinker. This may come as a surprise to anyone who looks at standard surveys of philosophy of education*" (Small, 2014, p.9). The conventional educational science/pedagogy circle may be not so keen to admit it, but this is true. Actually he "*was never an academic teacher or researcher, but this goes for other important figures in education. It is also true that he did not write any works solely on education*"; however, "*he wrote more on the subject than most people think. His concern was society as a whole, and whatever he says about education tends to be part of some wider discussion. Still, these texts contain enough to provide not just an understanding of the schooling of his time but also a surprisingly detailed plan for the schooling of the future*" (Small, 2014, p.10). Considering his all-theoretical contribution to education, schooling, etc. we can easily define Karl Marx as a theorist of educational studies regardless of what is our scientific, philosophical or political position in life.

There are two main important lines of Marx and Engels's contribution to education science: 1. They provide us a methodological perspective as a part of their general historical materialism for understanding how education and schooling function in capitalist societies. 2. There is also another powerful dimension in their understanding and analyzing society which emphasize the potential towards socialism. Karl Marx certainly foresee "*an 'education of the future', suitable for a society not divided into classes. He believes that this education can exist already within a capitalist society, at least in some 'embryonic' form. Hence, his qualified endorsement of the trend towards enseignement professionnel, and his proposal for a school which will eventually 'raise the working class far above the level of the higher and middle classes'*" (Small, 2014, p.85). Marx's way of thinking is focused on seeing and analyzing the potentials emerging in capitalist societies and how these will transform societies entirely. This works the same way for education as well. Educational institutions in capitalist society are creating a possibility for realizing socialism from this point of view.

In Max's critique of capitalism "*commodity*" is seen as the "*germ-cell*" of the society. In order "*to be consistent with Marx's method, then, it would be necessary to show how such spheres of traditional teaching, adult education, vocational education, or health care emerge and develop from the social formation whose 'germ-cell' is the commodity and to see the problems and contradictions within these spheres in that light*" (Jones, 2011, p.199). That is a strong methodological way to analyze education in capitalist socio-economic formation. The importance of Marx's methodology for analyzing "*education, therefore, is that it requires us to see the specific role that educational institutions, policies, and practices play and might play on this particular battlefield; it makes us try to understand and resist or mitigate the negative, dehumanizing effects of so-called 'education' and to work out how the potential role of teachers and educational practices in the struggle for human freedom may best be promoted and realized*" (Jones, 2011, p.212). Education provides us opportunities for freedom and social justice, for transforming society in a progressive way.

We need to "*remember that Marx located education within 'practical social relations' rather than with art, religion and philosophy in the higher regions of the social 'superstructure'*" (Small, 2014, p.94). Being in the sphere of "*practical social relations*" makes education similar to other "*means of production*" which means its real potential would be beyond the limits of bourgeois ideology.

Consciousness is another crucial concept for "*critical education theory*"; Marx's understanding "*consciousness*" has a central position in this context. It is also important "*for understanding the role of education in the reproduction of labor and capitalist social relations*" *and it ("Marxist theorization of consciousness") can be considered as "the theorization of praxis*" (Carpenter, 2011, p.118). Marx and Engels defended "*that through the method of dialectical historical materialism, abstraction could be used in order to fully explicate the essence of dialectically contradictory relations. It is this form of consciousness, (…), that has become the epistemological imperative of the Marxist theorization of education and learning*" (Carpenter, 2011, p.125). Between societies, social models, classes and ideological directions dialectical contradiction can be observed. In terms of education different levels and quality of consciousness are posing several orientations for scientific and intellectual activities. In this work our main position is going to be scrutinizing that education is how relevant for social justice, freedom and progress of societies.

Social theory and philosophy of Karl Marx is about changing the world through understanding and transforming "*material reality*" of society. His dialectical methodology "*allows us to engage with the complex dynamics of our material reality, and to do so in ways that do not flatten our humanity, nor alienate us from our lived experiences. And, in the interests of liberation from capitalist exploitation and inequality, a Marxist education can help us understand how schools, teaching, learning, and curriculum can all play a role in the process of learning to change the world*" (Au, 2018, p.187). Besides the parts of texts on education in the works of Marx, his general critique and analysis of modern society can be applied into the topic of education, teaching and learning as well. According to him "*the state is certainly engaged in education, but by bringing individuals to rise above identifying themselves with particular interests and to participate in the life of the whole community*" (Small, 2014, 20). The IWMAs (The International Workingmen's Association) policy was "*consistent with the Communist Manifesto's call for free public education, combined with 'industrial production', but goes into more detail, especially in relation to the school curriculum*" (Small, 2014, p.68). Education was an important topic for the International.

Marx kept focusing on "*educational issues*" and he saw "*that role of the state was a central issue for any future form of schooling. The resolution on children's work and education passed at the 1866 IWMA congress began with the regulation of child labour and the combination of work with schooling, and then put the case for using state power to establish public education. Marx knew that its audience would be suspicious of reliance on what they regarded as a power hostile to the working class. The policy argued that there were no available alternatives*" (Small, 2014, p.71). Besides discussions on "*state support for education*", the IWMA policy (1866) also focused on "*designing a basic curriculum for the new school that it wants to create for the children of the working class*". "*Three types of education is understood: 1. Mental education, 2. Physical education (gymnastics, sports, exercise), 3. Technological training (teaching required*

technical information for production." According to Marx for this purpose *"a gradual and progressive course of mental, gymnastic, and technological training ought to correspond with the classification of the juvenile workers. The costs of the technological schools ought to be partly met by the sale of the products. The combination of paid productive labour, mental education, bodily exercise and polytechnic training, will raise the working class far above the level of the higher and middle classes"* (Small, 2014, p.76-77). Socialism is a determined period of human history for Marx, therefore his understanding of education is connected with the transformation towards socialism.

Scientific/methodological approach originated in Marx's teaching has indicated the major points about our subject: 1. Education is potentially a transforming power for all societies regardless their economic or political orientation. 2. Socialists are interested in the progress towards social justice, equality and freedom. Education is an effective vehicle for this purpose in the critical ideological context of socialism. Saying this, now we can proceed and discuss how the main components of education, teaching and learning, are realized in our societies.

3. Researches and discussion on education, teaching and learning in modern society

Education is a systematic way for development of individuals and societies. It has been formalized and institutionalized for efficiently responding challenges educators have been facing. The process of *"formal education"* has been realized as *"we see ourselves increasingly as one among others"*; however, *"the relational sense of personhood is not sufficiently rich or diverse"* for constituting the required *"practical environment for teaching and learning"*. For achieving this *"we need to embrace a notion of community"* (Splitter, 2016, p.105). The success of education is based on community, not merely coming from individual skills or abilities. Community's role in education bringing *"full recognition to the intra- and interpersonal relationships that make language, knowledge, and morality possible (…) indeed, it will be no more – but no less – than a network of such relationships"* and *"a concept of community which fulfils these possibilities and constitutes a refreshing new paradigm – a form of life – for schools, classrooms, and other teaching and learning environments"* (Splitter, 2016, p.105). Network of social relation in communities is a practical basis for higher targets in education.

It is said that education's three practice levels *"namely, policy, teaching, and learning, constitute a mechanism of 'quality' assurance that places more emphasis on the technical and less the ethical dimension of education, which requires the performance of critical thinking"* (Wai, 2016, p.23). There should be a balance between technical and ethical aspects. Especially when we focus on socio-cultural and socio-psychological aspects of contemporary societies it is more apparent that ethical aspect is crucial.

Educational system has a core importance in our societies. It has a function *"in contemporary society, providing the basic substantive content thought to be necessary for society as it is, and for society as it is to become in a future imagined community (…)"*. In this context *"schooled education is supposed to provide the cultural content required for a very wide and increasing variety of modern roles"* and also *"provides the most legitimated substantive basis for*

allocation of people into roles running from the occupational and economic, the political and organizational, and even personal and familial relationships. For all of these types of roles, socialization and training through education are understood to provide the underlying cultural content" (McEneaney, 2006, p.189). Saying this, we should emphasize that education is a multi-functional social institution which has one of the highest effective powers for reproduction of contemporary society.

Schools, families, and communities have a cooperation for educational success. These partnerships have an influential role for improving schools. This kind of cooperation is "*one of many topics on most school improvement agendas*". It is asked: "*Do good home-school-community connections increase the likelihood that other components of school improvement (e.g., curriculum, innovative instruction, new assessments) will succeed? What combinations of school and classroom organizational innovations have the greatest positive effects on students' attendance, achievement, behavior, or other desired results?*" (Epstein, 2006, p.300). The answers to these questions need to be analyzed for particular nations, regions or locations with unique researches. There are universal principles and measures for sure in educational strategies. However, sometimes a specific location or social context require a specific way of applications. We need to consider this always.

Global challenges bring the need for interaction and cooperation worldwide in terms of education. Another concept discussed in this context is "*global citizenship*". It is said global citizenship "*is required first of all because the facilitation of cooperation requires understanding of the value of cooperating; a well-informed critical capacity to guard against the strategies used by corporate front groups and others to misinform, discourage, and subvert cooperation; understanding of the possible institutional bases of cooperation*" especially as the example of the United Nations; "*the understanding, skills, abilities, and knowledge that may be needed to participate in cooperative arrangements*" (Curren, 2010, p.73). The second "*consideration is that education for global citizenship is required to secure the legitimacy of whatever terms of cooperation might be negotiated (…)*". It requires that a "*voluntary cooperation based on a sound understanding of what is at stake and how the cooperative arrangements have been arrived at. Creating a semblance of a global rule of law is, like instituting any rule of law, an essentially educative enterprise (…)*" (Curren, 2010, p.73-74). Global citizenship, possible global standards for education and mutual aid, international solidarity and cooperation are among the topics in 21st century about which decision makers need to arrange their positions. Socialist educational policies can go beyond the limits of capitalist economy.

What are the main objectives of education? Why are societies focused on education with such high levels of emphasis? When we try to find answers to these questions, we see that education prepares people in society from several aspects. The objectives of education may be:

1. Preparing students to today's society,
2. Preparation for currently organized societal processes,
3. Preparing for changing society through researches,
4. Preparation for the unpredictable future,
5. Preparation for students' personal progress,

6. Preparing workers to the economy,
7. Preparing them as consumers,
8. Preparing them to have leisure (Meighan, 1997, p.35).

All these points of education are contributing to reproduction of society as a whole through different layers. As the summation of all the mentioned preparations individuals become citizens and the population is transformed into an organized society with aims and purposes.

What we have focused on education until here is mostly on major orientations, global aspects and macro levels of education as a social institution. We need to get more specific on scientific and theoretical knowledge regarding socio-psychological aspects of teaching and learning. Sociology of education, pedagogical studies and educational psychology have a wide amount of literature on this subject. In this research literature we are going to find a roadmap for enhancing educational strategies for the benefit of people.

Sociology of education is one of the dynamic subdisciplines of sociology. It *"borrows and utilizes concepts from sociological theory, philosophy, economics, political theory, social anthropology, psychoanalysis and psychology"* (Demaine, 1983, p.14). By this way it is having really an interdisciplinary nature. Sociology of education focuses on *"the family, the education system, the economy and the polity, and with relations between them. It is concerned with social institutions and with the socialization process with which they are involved. There is a specific concern with the interrelated issues of the socialization of human individuals and the selection and allocation of individuals within the role-structure of adult society (…)"* (Demaine, 1983, p.14). Sociology of education is analyzing how the division of labor realized on *"socio-technical"* level (Demaine, 1983, p.27). For a comprehensive perspective sociology of education is looking at *"four major elements"* and their relations with each other: *"the cultural resources of the family, the cultural resources of the school, the material resources of the family and the material resources of the school"* (Demaine, 1983, p.31). Therefore, analyses are not just conducted on technical dimensions, socio-cultural elements are focused as well.

Contemporary *"sociology of education and technology"* is bringing *"its sociological imagination to the service of ongoing and extensive dialogue with learners, educators, developers and civil society groups in order to identify, imagine and to explore"* ways for effective educational processes (Facer, 2013, p.228-229). This imagination even may bring us to a poetic concept of education.

"Educational poetics" term is used by Andrew Gitlin, with his reference to G. Bachelard, *"to describe an epistemological approach that moves between inspiration and traditional views of knowledge such that reflection on experience is a process emerging from the mind/body as well as the soul"* and *"taken together, mind/body/soul refers to the process of 'inventing oneself'"* (Gitlin, 2006, p.169). When we take this concept from a closer view, *"institutional education is often a process of socialization, part of a system of accommodation and control aimed at producing conformity of one type or another, poetics is typically about the puncture of socialization, the common way of being or understanding the world"* (Gitlin, 2006, p.169-170). Considering that we are living in a world losing its lyricism and poetics day

to day, mentioning "*educational poetics*" is perhaps an opportunity for educators and scholars.

Teachers, for managing teaching activities and teaching new skills, need to understand all required steps of those particular skills. For this purpose, in "*task analysis*" a task is divided into a sequence of steps to make it more manageable (Duchesne, 2016, p.209). For instance, in order to make a watercolor painting there should be paper, water, and having a figure physically or in mind, Etc. Teachers should also evaluate the Socioeconomic Status (SES) for assessing and improving students' skills. SES is measured according to education level of parents, job and economic income (Duchesne, 2016, p.423). If the social environment of families is known, it can be helpful to set correct measures for improving students' levels.

Educational studies and literature show "*the overlapping spheres of influence model*" *in education. There are the following six models: 1. Parenting: helping families to understand the development of children and adolescents, establishing supportive environments at home. 2. Communicating: maintaining effective ways of communication at schools for students' progress. 3. Volunteering: organizing volunteer support activities for schools. 4. Learning at home: providing necessary information to families about helping students at home (homeworks, activities, etc.) 5. Decision-making: give responsibilities to parent representatives in decisions of school. 6. Collaborating with community: integrating resources from communities to support schools and students (also families)*" (Epstein, 2016, p.289). The overlapping models are supporting each other in a multi-dimensional character.

Teachers may have different "*classroom strategies*", one of them is "*portraying themselves as learners, by asking the class at the end of the lesson when revisiting the learning objectives, how the lesson could have been improved*" (Bentham, S. p.93). Collaboration in school, students' "*working together*" is a common proven method. At schools "*the goal of collaboration is to enhance students' learning. When the primary goal of collaboration is to help students learn, we call the collaboration collaborative learning. In other cases, the primary goal of collaboration may be to solve a problem or to create something, as when a student council meets to decide how to spend its money or a school newspaper staff meets to plan its next edition*" (Chinn, 2011, p.14). "*Collaborative learning*" is especially important for socio-psychological aspects of teaching and learning. This collaboration is actually a part of the broader aim of "*developing interpersonal relationships*". Teachers are facing three key relationships in this context: 1. Teacher-student relationship, 2. Student-student relationship, and 3. Teacher-parent relationship (Chinn, 2011, p.237). This is a dynamic communicative social process. "*Student-student relationship*" is the core social and psychological basis for learning from each other at classrooms. This "*gives children the opportunity to articulate their own thinking and acknowledges them for having their own unique thoughts*"; beside this opportunity "*it also allows children to learn from each other. Research suggests that children, and adults, develop understanding as they interact within their social environment (…) together, the students and the teacher are constructing understanding.*" When one child is understanding his/her understanding is contributing to the others' understanding as well in an interactional way (Franke, 1997, p.324). Group work is a perfect form for this interaction. Teachers sometimes are having troubles with "*difficult classrooms*". Group work would not be easy

with a "*challenging class*", however "*it is not impossible*". Teachers with this kind of classes prefer individual works for the sake of control over them. Actually "*these strategies may be appropriate to establish control in the short term, they may not promote an effective range of learning skills in the longer term. The key to effective group work is organisation. Even challenging pupils will work effectively in well organised groups and will follow instructions, provided the instructions are straightforward and direct*" (DfES 0444-2004 G, 2004, p.258). Saying this, the importance of communication appears once again. Teachers should establish an effective way of communication with their students, try to understand them and apply required measures of motivation.

Both motivation and theories of it are very diverse. Six major perspectives on motives are mentioned: 1. "*Motives as behavior change*", 2. "*Motives as goals*", 3. "*Motives as interests*", 4. "*Motives as attributions about success*", 5. "*Motives as beliefs about self-efficacy*", 6. "*Motives as self-determination*" (Seifert, 2009, p.110). Different students might be motivated through one or several of these lines. Teacher should understand his/her student's individual case to decide which suits best. With right ways of motivation teacher will contribute positively to the student's establishing "*personhood*" in his/her childhood. Personhood is a general phenomenon, "*as an essentially relational construct, does not (…) respect the boundaries of the various groups and associations to which we belong. If, but only if, young people develop a strong sense of personhood by reflecting on and inquiring into both their own circumstances and those of others, then they will be inoculated against the presumption that their identities can be destroyed or even significantly disrupted by any change in their group affiliations and associations. They will also be empowered to think for themselves*" (Splitter, 2016, p.108). This is a critical step for being individual and citizen, taking place in the society beyond narrow limits of local communities.

"*Intentional learning*" is discussed for enhancing educational activities. Anyone trying to learn successfully needs to discover if s/he learns it properly and how big progress s/he is doing. In this sense s/he has to be open for correcting himself/herself or being corrected, if s/he has any mistakes. In this process "*It is often, especially for a beginner, very difficult without assistance to tell whether he is learning it right; and what, if any, progress he is actually making*". This is among the reasons "*why it is usually useful to have a teacher. But whether intentional learning is to occur with or without intentional teaching there can be no escape in either from some sort of monitoring and assessment of progress, and from the use of the findings of this monitoring and assessment as the occasions and stimuli for further achievement. It is a mark of insincerity of educational purpose to propose either as an educational ideal, or as an educational policy, the abolition of all assessment, and all examinations*" (Flew, 1976, p.97). Assessments and examinations are crucial for any kind of learning regardless it is onsite, online, digital, distance or independent study. Sometimes we may hear from some people for being "*radical*", "*alternative*" or "*progressive*" their talking about abolishing exams and related procedures. This kind of discourses are not serious, not contributing at all human values and frequently it is better to ignore them for the sake of using that time in a beneficial way for the people instead of bothering to answer them.

In capitalist societies "*schooling and education can play important roles in challenging capitalist relations*". Students, in accordance with Marx's foresight can go beyond capitalist

limits through education. There is a "*relationship between how we teach and the development of critical consciousness that favors equality and social justice*"; in this sense, it is "*showing how a dialectical materialist analysis of pedagogy can help us better understand the relationship between teaching and social transformation*". The important point is "*what we teach—the curriculum—in fostering critical consciousness and social change*" (Au, 2018, p.157). As for socialist socio-economic/socio-political contexts and education, the transformative power is much higher under the conditions of socialism.

In socialist perspective education is considered as "*both human capital logic*", and also "*as a fundamental human right*" with international dimensions. Socialist educational policy has a strategy from kindergartens to universities to grow citizens with progressive values, attitudes and behaviors; cultivating them "*with a mix of knowledge of which a part was previously only accessible to the nobility and bourgeoisie*"; giving them transformative energy end power toward social justice and equality (Griffiths, 2013, p.23). On national and international level socialist view of education is endeavoring for growing generations who feel responsible for the progress of their own countries and the World (Griffiths, 2013, p.25). Education can contribute positively for creation of a new men/women model who are highly responsible about their societies and all humanity, their own land and the rest of the World, with a great sensitivity on social justice, solidarity and environmental/ecological issues. Education is a social institution with such important possibilities.

4. Conclusion

Education is a social reality and power as old as the history of humanity. We have created our social world through production, organization and education. There are many layers of socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural dimensions of society which have been possible with education. We are learning how to be social actors, citizens, workers and political activists besides many other positions, in educational processes. The world has been transformed with pedagogical praxis during thousands of years. Therefore, education is remaining as the important focus of social sciences.

Karl Marx with his intriguing scientific and philosophical works revolutionized the field of social theory. He showed the critical path towards understanding and transforming society; his methodology is providing us an opportunity for dialectically analyzing society's different components. As for education, it also has dialectical dynamics in its nature: today and future, reality and imagination, obligations and dreams, responsibilities and freedom, etc. several potentials, dialectical elements and possibilities are emerging in its prolific structure.

In this article we looked closer to two theoretical lines regarding education: 1. Marx's social vision and this vision's relevance in educational studies. 2. Social and psychological aspects of teaching and learning. Of course, this is a very wide subject, here we have just tried to set a basis for further studies and analyses.

Let us remember Karl Marx's famous and powerful 11th thesis on Feuerbach: "*Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it*".

Changing the World, creating a more inclusive society with increasing social justice and equality are much more important than any theory or textual discourses in the field of education. Real world requires real and effective steps. This is the only determining solution internationally.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

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