

Introduction to the Special Section: Peripathetic Journey of Education in a Globalizing and “Educationalized” World

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In this special international issue, *Pensamiento Educativo* critically addresses core themes underlying our current discourse on education and conveys alternative ways of thinking about them. Our contributors historicize the issues by addressing contemporary problems and assumptions from a historical perspective. To historicize does not imply to narrate a past detached from the present, but to enlighten the genesis of the present ideologies, aspirations, and (sometimes) fooleries that have become commonplace in educational discourse and practice. Nonetheless, the purpose is not only deconstruction, but the freeing of oneself from the burden of unconscious effects of the past and tradition. As Quentin Skinner (2002a) puts it, we have to use the opportunity “that historical study [has] the power to transform us, to help us think more effectively about our society and its possible need for reform and reformation” (p. 26), because “to learn from the past... is to learn one of the keys to self-awareness itself” (Skinner, 2002b, p. 89).

It is no exaggeration to say that self-awareness is one of the key competencies that a teacher needs to have, not only as a teacher of curriculum, but as a public figure, fulfilling a role that is shaped by many different expectations. Whereas these competing expectations have never been in a harmonious balance, a technocratic ideal started to prevail over others. This signifies a shift in the question of expertise from actors in the field, to actors in the central administrations of the Ministries and Think Tanks with a consequent deprofessionalization of teaching. The prospective teacher, the professional educator, should be provided with the tools to question curricula and practices and develop practical wisdom from her/his own experience. This is what a historical perspective provides.

Cosmopolitanism emerges as a promising philosophy of education¹ (Hansen 2012, 2013) for our globalizing times, with a critical inclusive perspective well beyond economic and technocratic world views. David T. Hansen and Ana Cecilia Galindo Diego –in their article “A Cosmopolitan Spirit, or Life as Education: Octavio Paz and Rabindranath Tagore”– found in the notion of cosmopolitanism an imaginative critical way of thinking of education as an orientation toward life, a process that entails reflective openness to new ideas and people and reflective loyalty to particular norms and traditions. From a pragmatist standpoint, James Scott Johnston, aware that the self as locus of consciousness has come into question for some time now, argues in his article “Theorizing Globalization: Rival Philosophical Schools of Thought” that pragmatism can provide a better foundation for theories of globalization than critical and post-structuralist theories that deny the importance of subjectivity; he rescues a theory of the self, naturalist and immanent, and the notion of transformation of the self through others. He relates this understanding to a notion of democracy and community grounded on shared experiences and social inquiry, and to the cultivation of habits and attitudes that could operate against the grain.

The current process of globalization has been analyzed (Tröhler, 2009, 2013) as an interpretation of a secularized religious worldview leading eventually to a uniformed, educationalized globe. Tröhler traces the historical register of this interpretation to the dualistic view of the self and the ‘world’ advocated mostly by Protestant Christianity; this view challenged the institutional holism of the Catholic Church and emphasized the (potential) universalism in everyone’s soul, which would eventually, in times of perceived crises, trigger educational aspirations directed toward the soul. An early acme of this shift was undoubtedly Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (Tröhler, 2014), both embodying and enforcing the idea that social problems are in fact educational problems. In this educationalized culture, after 1750, when Germans realized their political and academic lag behind France and England, they constructed the educational idea of *Bildung*, examined in this collection by Horlacher: the inward self-fulfillment of the soul refraining from contemporary artifacts such as economy, politics, or science. The ‘nutrition’ for the soul-to-be-educated was not a modern curriculum, but the aesthetic wholeness the German intelligentsia after 1750 –almost exclusively Lutheran ministers sustaining the most rigid dualism between the inner self and the outer world– meant to be discovered in Greek antiquity and its arts and poetry (Tröhler, 2006). The point here is that the genealogy of *Bildung* points to lack of clarity of its use when trying to question current technocratic approaches to education, as examined in this issue by Horlacher in “Bildung or the everlasting attractiveness of a fuzzy concept in German educational theory.” Her article is an attempt to deal with the misunderstandings emerging from current use of *Bildung* as an attractive slogan challenging the world of accountability.

The dualistic view of the self paved the way, Tröhler goes on, to today’s educationalized culture that had a global influence after the Second World War –via transnational organizations such as UNESCO, the World Bank, or the OECD (Tröhler 2009, 2010)– establishing and implementing a new language in which education is being negotiated across the world (Tröhler, 2012). However, it is important to note that the movement toward uniformity does not imply a rampant globalism erasing national institutions, traditions (Dale, 2003, 2014; Bruno-Jofré & Johnston, 2014), and the force of new ways of thinking and enacting democracy in a digital era, along with less conventional forms of organization and protest. Chile is a case in point. There is, of course, the debate on the reception of ideas and movements and the workings of subsystems such as the educational one (Bruno-Jofré, Johnston, Jover, & Tröhler, 2010; Bruno-Jofré & Schriewer, 2011).

In his article, “Measuring What We Value or Valuing What We Measure? Globalisation, Accountability and the Question of Educational Purpose,” Gert Biesta skillfully examines the difference between a technical-managerial idea(l) of accountability and a professional or democratic idea(l) of accountability by analyzing the reconfiguration of the relationship between the state and its citizens in the shift from a professional and democratic approach to a technical managerial one. This shift is embedded in international developments that are usually identified as globalization, and embodies a specially narrow notion of the cosmopolitan.

¹ <http://library.queensu.ca/ojs/index.php/encounters/issue/view/489/showToc>

In the midst of buzzwords such as excellence, quality, and accountability, there has been a shift away from coherent and comprehensive views and a neglect of educational aims with a strong concentration on short term objectives (Bruno-Jofré & Hills, 2011). What is forgotten is that notions of excellence, quality, or success are intimately related to our views concerning the nature and purposes of education. The problem is that at various times in the recent past, terms such as excellence and quality have served as surrogates for talks of the aims in education, which in the end provide the criteria by which we judge our choices, objectives, and outcomes since we evaluate to what extent our aims or purposes are realized, whether these are long or short-term focused objectives. The point is that even superficial slogans mask profound differences in outlook, but also that notions of quality and excellence moved the learning process from ethical matters, to test scores and value-added testable improvements in literacy and numeracy. This is a rather technical view of excellence and quality that may hinder democratic formation (Bruno-Jofré & Hills, 2011), a theme addressed in all these papers.

Noddings (2007) wrote that “as a result of the test-prep craze, students are able to subtract when they are told explicitly to subtract and to solve linear equations when they are instructed to ‘solve the following linear equations,’ but many are unable to figure out when to use these procedures in solving problems. They are not acquiring intellectual habits of mind” (p. 1). As she said (2007), there is little time left to build mental frameworks that give meaning to what the students learn. Noddings is not suggesting that there is no place for specific learning objectives or for testing, but she is pointing to the qualities and understandings a teacher should have and the autonomy to guide the learning process. The test-prep craze has developed within the contours of a world trend set by supranational organizations, in particular the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This issue is fully addressed by Gert Biesta in his article here.

The epistemic rules changed in light of new global configurations of education at the intersection of economic globalization, intense circulation of knowledge, and technological changes that transformed not only social relations, but ways and times of knowing (ubiquitous knowledge, Burbules 2013). The historical conditions framed the change, but what is the intentionality underlying various ways of rethinking epistemic rules (Bruno-Jofré, 2011). Critically minded educators seem to be still trying to find their own set of propositions to engage with emerging configurations that embrace and direct educational policies in what Daniel T. Rodgers (2011) calls “an age of fracture.” In other words, this is an age of great fluidity, from flexible markets to racial and gender identities divided in multiple identities, to a more restrictive notion of community and uncertain purposes and meanings. James Scott Johnston’s paper argues that dominant intellectual currents such as post-structuralism and critical theory tend to essentialize difference, hence his proposal to move to pragmatism. The challenge for educators then resides on one side, in developing a “cosmopolitan artfulness in human affairs,” one that is rooted in a “notion of inhabiting or dwelling in the human as well as natural world” (Hansen, 2012) without losing grounding in one’s culture, life, and values.

On the other side, there is the task to generate tools leading to a critical understanding of education the workings of different communities, social practices, cultural understandings, and local economies, which operate within larger configurational settings that exercise visible and invisible forms of power. The latter includes forms of intervention from the World Bank and the OECD. All this occurs in a world that is, by and large, digital, with an ontology based on social relations, and new intuitive ways to understand democracy at the grassroots. Interesting shifts seems to be in the making. While Hansen explores here the notion of cosmopolitanism, placing it at the core of philosophy of education, Johnston’s paper is trying to move the debate on globalization and education to less explored grounds, taking us back to pragmatism and paying attention to subjectivity and the building of democratic communities.

The transnational movement of educational ideas and policies is not new and has historically shown complex processes of reception and unexpected results; modern schooling often became a contentious social and political space with a transnational character. The historical conditions of possibility have set the parameters to deal with difference, with *otherness*, a term that gained currency in the last decades of the twentieth century. This is particularly evident in the role of Catholic education in Canada and the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Church played an important political educational role by construing identities and evangelizing through Catholic schooling at the intersection of the building of the modern state and its correspondences with economic liberalism (Bruno-Jofré, 2013). Thus, we can talk of the role of Catholic schooling (mostly in the hands of international teaching

congregations) in the forming of American Catholicism, building a Catholic national identity whose complexity was not free from contradictions (Thompson, 2013).²

One can argue that neither pluralism, Diasporas, hybrid configurations of identities, nor transnational movements are new. The process of educationalization/pedagogization of social institutions affecting our lifeworld has been around for a long time, although it intensified in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the current historical juncture calls for awareness and renewed ways of thinking along with new communicative constellations and related new ways of exercising collective agency beyond traditional political channels. There is a sense that multiculturalism/interculturality and related concepts seem inadequate to deal with claims of social and political movements, collective and individual rights, active engagement with diversity, contemporary anatomy of power, and the need to embrace the world that goes beyond what is human.³ Hansen and Galindo Diego certainly go beyond notions of citizenship to a notion of dwelling in the world.

The current process of globalization fueled by the technological revolution and an encompassing global political economy has its own “mode of historical consciousness” (Bruno-Jofre & Johnston, 2014), and large sets of accords in higher education like the Bologna Process set a stage for transnational movements and forms of standardization. It is a scenario in which supranational organizations such as the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development have developed an extraordinarily intrusive role in schooling and in teacher education, generating substantive impact on discourse and practice, in particular through large-scale comparative measurements of educational outcomes. Gert Biesta deals with the nuances of this impact. The juncture opens the way to the question (a necessary one) guiding James Scott Johnston’s article in this collection: what school of thought would serve better when theorizing globalization while attending to questions of being and knowledge? He pursues a theorizing of globalization that does not neglect an account of self and community, which is necessary in order to talk about democratic practices and education. Meanwhile, the search for concepts and metaphors that could counter a semantic field centered on accountability have led to the use of concepts such as *Bildung* without understanding its own historical genealogy, thus setting limits to the development of a systematic critique and historically rooted alternative vision.

This journal is housed and produced in Chile by one of the most prestigious universities in Latin America, the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. This issue offers refreshing approaches on contemporary issues in education from perspectives and different locations, mainly North America and Europe. It is a timely issue. The reality in Chile, where education has been at the center of a social movement led by students with widespread support, highlighted the limits to international imposition. The language of education and a semantic field with old concepts such as quality, access, and equity appear intertwined with a changing landscape of political life, and new ways of communicating and doing politics.

² In the case of Canada in the first half of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church in French-Canadian communities in Western Canada enacted an oppositional notion of citizenship and the politics of identity conjugated faith, language, and schools were part of regional and national networks that sustained a French-Canadian political agenda. However, the same teaching congregations joined the state policy aims albeit with different intentionalities, in the process of colonization of Aboriginal Peoples (Bruno-Jofré, 2013).

³ For a discussion of indigeneity and more-than-human world, see C. Beeman (2013).

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