

Abstracts

The world's leading education figures

Coordination: Jean-Marie De Ketele

Introduction

The transformation of education over time: A long march

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Jean-Marie De Ketele

The 79th issue of the *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres* focuses on the great figures who, over the centuries, have changed education and had an influence extending beyond the time in which they lived. The selected authors have striven to present the figures or movements in question to the best of their ability. They situate them with precision in the context in which they emerged and clearly show the dreamlike or utopian dimension of what they conveyed. In the introduction to this dossier, the coordinator of this issue articulates the paths that draw these figures together, potentially invoking links woven over the centuries with other figures or movements that are not covered in the contributions. The introduction thus responds to the objective that informed the development of this issue: to attempt to foreground the chain of events, ideas and ruptures that hint at the future path of education.

The legacy of Confucius

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ZHAO Jing, WU Gangping

Born in 551 BCE in the land of Lu, during the chaotic final days of the Zhou dynasty, Confucius developed his thinking around two key concepts he deemed necessary for a harmonious society: respect for rites, which characterized the successful period of the dynasty, and humanity, typical of the “good men” of his region. While in subsequent generations these two concepts were subject to change or stagnation, depending on the period, Confucianism has always influenced Chinese and Asian culture. The three dimensions of the good man identified by Confucius (qualitative, quantitative and transformational) remain significant: the diversity of people and students, which requires tailored strategies; teachings that are few in number but thorough; and the choice of methods to move in a continuous effort from the concrete to the abstract. Currently, Confucianism is the subject of much research and penetrates all areas of social life, not only in China but also in Japan, Singapore and Korea.

Plato and *Paideia*: The democratic horizon

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Didier Moreau

Paideia is a major concept in the history of thought and educational practices. Paradoxically, it receives little explanation in Greek philosophy, because it participates in the latter's shared foundations. After having characterized its founding function in the thought of the City through the reading of Platonic texts, the author shows that this concept remains deeply active in our horizon of thought when we attempt to conceive of education as the foundation of democracy. Werner Jaeger's interpretation sheds light on its importance in the rise of Renaissance thought, and questions our ability to further promote free education as a component of being-together directed toward knowledge and self-development.

Averroès' ambition, from Islamic studies to the natural and rational sciences

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Romdhane Ben Mansour

Born in Cordoba in 1126, Averroès was trained in the religious and literary sciences of his time, but he expanded his training by studying so-called profane disciplines. His study and commentary on Aristotle's work led him to design an important scientific and educational project for the time, based on two principles: scientific criteria and methods as the foundation of science, and ways to teach and learn knowledge. He therefore recommended not following to the letter the traditional teaching recommended in Andalusia – which required memorizing theological principles – and making a clean sweep of received wisdom, which is an obstacle to the advent of certainty. On the contrary, it is necessary to tailor teaching to students' level and to teach the disciplines in a certain order. Such ideas could barely be countenanced in his world, but opened the way to Western secular values and modern didactics.

Ibn Khaldun, a theory of education ahead of its time

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Mongia Arfa Mensia

Born in 1332, Ibn Khaldun taught in the major intellectual capitals of his day and witnessed the erosion of the political world in which he lived. He wanted to design a social project by demonstrating the importance of science and education in social life. He thus undertook a classification of the sciences, in which he distinguishes the traditional sciences, which are passed down to us and guarantee stability to the political authorities, and the rational sciences, to which the reasoning man arrives thanks to his natural faculties alone. He revolutionized education by advocating a teaching that follows a pedagogical and progressive order, from the simplest to the most complex; a judicious choice of textbooks; a good command of language to speak well, argue and convince; and a rejection of corporal punishment and any aggressive behaviour. Ahead of their time, the ideas of Averroès made little dent in the world of traditional education. Later analysts have shown, however, how some of his contributions are close to those of the Italian Reformation, Montaigne, Montesquieu, Comte, Bachelard, Piaget, and Chevallard.

**From the “class community” to “globalized” systems:
The evolution of African education systems**

p. 79

Masengesho Kamuzinzi

Current African education systems are a result of multiple legacies and influences. It is difficult to identify the major figures whose initiatives or writings impacted significantly the conception of education in Africa. In the absence of satisfactory criteria for drawing up a list of the most important authors in the continent, the article analyses the major trends that have marked the debate around key educational issues at different periods. The author thus discusses the central role of the community in creating and transmitting new knowledge in traditional societies. He criticizes the poor contextualization of colonial education and the lack of coherent educational models during the single-party period. He discusses the progress made in terms of philosophical and theoretical conceptualization of post-colonial education in Africa. He ends by highlighting areas of collaboration in this era of globalization.

Rousseau, Condorcet, Ferry: A pantheon for the republican school

p. 89

Alain Boissinot

Rousseau, Condorcet and Ferry, after whom countless French schools are named, have become myths, to the point that the legend can sometimes obscure the exact scope of their commitments. Reading them carefully, one observes that their positions are often more subtle than polemics around school would suggest. Indeed, they echo one another. Their works and actions, both in the areas where they converge and diverge, are helpful in understanding the role and the challenges of schooling in a country which, since the Revolution of 1789, and in accordance with a great philosophical tradition, has always made education a major political issue.

Child development: Piaget’s contribution to the field of education

p. 99

Etienne Bourgeois

Although the work of Jean Piaget (1896–1980) does not at first sight seem to confer a central place to educational questions, it has nevertheless profoundly influenced educational discourse and practices for decades. This contribution examines the broad outlines of Piaget’s educational vision and the criticisms it has raised. It traces how it has penetrated educational discourses and practices across space and time, and finally discusses the relevance of Piaget’s work faced with the challenges present in the field of education today.

Lev Vygotsky: Initiator of social constructivism and elusive thinker on education

p. 109

Veronika Tašner, Slavko Gaber

In the present work the authors attempt to give a concise introduction of Vygotsky and his role in establishing a new scientific discipline called paedology. The authors also outline the reasons why Vygotsky was temporarily eliminated from scholarly discourse. Then, Vygotsky’s most relevant concepts are introduced from elementary and higher mental functions in children, to the meaning of language (symbol) and its orienting and regulatory potentials for understanding children’s unequal learning achievements related to the child’s social environment and conditioned by the ideal forms of this environment from very early age on. The above mentioned has had an important impact on defining sociolinguistics, which forms important part of the reflective practices in the education.

Learning as a social and democratic process in John Dewey

p. 117

Sarah M. Stitzlein

A prominent American scholar and education philosopher throughout the late 19th and early-mid 20th centuries, John Dewey’s progressive ideals focused on learning as a social, democratic process. His theories

were developed through years of worldwide travel, careful observation, and expansive experimentation, and focused on shifting away from the Industrial Era's assembly-line view of education to a more fluid construction of learning. Dewey's work remains a cornerstone of progressive education and continues to influence theory and practice around the globe.

Freud and the psychoanalytic approach: Another look at the educational relationship p. 127

Mireille Cifali

The contribution of Freud and his successors is essential to our knowledge of the relationships between adult and child. These are governed by unconscious mechanisms to which it is important to pay attention in order to avoid a downward slide, both in parental practices and those of teachers. Psychoanalysis has studied a whole series of tensions and set out frames of reference for dealing with them: between authoritarianism and authority, love and otherness; between responsibility conferred to the child or on the contrary to the adult; between an urge for destructive death or for constructive life; and between the cognitive and the emotional. In educational practice, the psychoanalytic approach advocates a clinical posture that co-constructs a meaning that causes change, a subjectivity acknowledged and accepted by the confrontation of subjectivities, an ethic of otherness and singularity, and a linkage between the psychic and the social. Disseminated internationally by people affiliated to academic institutions, the psychoanalytical approach is also present in training institutions and in pedagogical currents, such as institutional pedagogy or in what are known as "Support for Support" groups.

Maria Montessori: Thinking about early childhood education p. 139

Livia Cadei, Chiara Sità

Maria Montessori went down in history by developing a method based upon a vision of education as a set of practices centred on the pupil's resources and his or her desire to explore and understand the world. This education, which is able to meet the specific needs and interests of the child on the one hand, and to respect their pace of development on the other, requires a complete rethinking of the traditional roles of teacher and pupil. What are the historical and cultural conditions that have encouraged the emergence of Montessorian pedagogy? What obstacles has the Montessorian method and its implementation in schools come up against? What is the contribution of the Montessorian approach to the contemporary idea of education and school? This article explores the Montessorian experiment and its legacy, in order to put forward answers to these questions.

Grundtvig and adult education in Scandinavia: A radical innovation p. 149

Ove Korsgaard

Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) is rightly regarded as the single individual who has had the greatest importance in the formation of the modern Danish nation state. His importance for this process is linked to his unremitting struggle to 'lift' the Danish peasantry culturally and socially. His prime purpose was to advance the idea among 'the masses' that they belonged to 'a people', and this required popular education and a new type of high school – a People's High School. The first school for young adults opened in Denmark in 1844, the other Nordic countries followed suit, with the first People's High Schools opening in Norway (1864), Sweden (1868), and Finland (1889). In the inter-war period Grundtvig's educational ideas and the People's High School movement inspired a series of reform movements in Eastern Europe, and after World War II several people in Asia and Africa. When it comes to teaching method Grundtvig distinguishes between 'scientific thinking' and 'narrative thinking' stressing the latter without overlooking the former.

Paulo Freire: Beyond adult literacy to emancipation p. 157

Venício A. de Lima, Marco Antonio Rodrigues Dias

A Brazilian pedagogue, Paulo Freire was also an internationally recognized humanist. Although he is known for his literacy work and his fight against illiteracy in his country, his conception of education was not limited to that. Not only does it serve the liberation of the oppressed, it also revolutionizes adult and higher education. Moreover, Paulo Freire fought against a "culture of silence" and his thought can be of service to those who consider that there is currently a return to Western ethnocentric "diffusionism" as a subtle process of alienation. His vision also contributes to reinforcing the concept of education as a public good: a universal right and an instrument of liberation, not a commercial service or something that serves a single system of thought.

El Sistema or music education for all: A global movement

p. 169

Anis Barnat

El Sistema, a project for social integration through the collective practice of music founded in Venezuela by J. A. Abreu (1939–2018), today exists in 65 countries, driven by local initiatives that adopt and adapt its values to their own challenges. It revolves around rethinking traditional pedagogy, putting the group at the forefront of concerns, without losing sight of artistic excellence. Even those most critical of the movement recognize the impact of this model, which has profoundly changed the approach to musical education beyond the place where it originated.