

Stefan Ramaekers · Naomi Hodgson *Editors*

Past, Present, and Future Possibilities for Philosophy and History of Education

Finding Space and Time for Research

On the occasion of the retirement of Paul Smeyers, this book considers the state and status of the philosophy and history of education today.

Over the last 20 years, the conditions in which research takes place have changed considerably. They have done so in ways that are often less than favourable to disciplines such as history and philosophy of education, and the space and time for the practices that constitute these disciplines – of reading, of writing, of collegiality – is increasingly under pressure. During this time, the Research Community on the History and Philosophy of Educational Research has convened annually to bring its critical lenses to bear on these emergent conditions and to suggest ways that educational research might, or ought to, be done otherwise.

As co-founder and co-convenor of the Research Community, this volume explores and recounts Paul Smeyers' development of Wittgensteinian scholarship and its legacy in education, his formative role in the development of philosophy of education as an international field, his many international collaborations, the "useless" educational-philosophical deepening of concepts, and the wider educational-philosophical import of this.

This gives rise to consideration of the failure of these fields to halt the changes in the governance and status of the university that threatens them, and those practices that remain and that are emerging in academia that we wish to protect, to pass on to the next generation of researchers in these fields.

Education

ISBN 978-3-319-94252-0



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research. In 2009, for example, I was invited by Paul to teach in Ghent to keep a chair in fundamental pedagogy warm for a younger colleague. In 2011 it transpired that this had been in vain; the chair was reallocated to a field with better research metrics. The research community did, however, provide initiation and opportunity for younger colleagues and established an international community of scholars whose work and appreciation of those events are reflected in the chapters that form this book.

The international conferences Paul Smeyers hosted in Leuven were always extremely well organised. The importance of good facilities is often underestimated, but never by Paul. The meetings of the International Research Community "Philosophy and History of the Discipline of Education," for which he and Marc Depaepe obtained funding from the Research Foundation Flanders, have been held in Leuven since 2000 to form a separate chapter. In this volume, other colleagues report about the success of that extraordinary enterprise.

Utrecht University
Utrecht, The Netherlands

Bas Levering

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Contributors

David Bridges University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK
St Edmund's College, Cambridge, UK
Homerton College, Cambridge, UK

Nicholas C. Burbules University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL,
USA

Stefaan E. Cuypers Centre for Logic and Philosophy of Science, KU Leuven,
Leuven, Belgium

Marc Depaepe Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Kulak Kortrijk
Campus, Kortrijk, Belgium

Lynn Fendler Department of Teacher Education, Michigan State University, East
Lansing, MI, USA

Naomi Hodgson Centre for Education and Policy Analysis, Department of
Education Studies, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, UK

Bas Levering Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands

Jan Masschelein Laboratory for Education & Society, KU Leuven, Leuven,
Belgium

Michael A. Peters University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Stefan Ramaekers Laboratory for Education & Society, KU Leuven, Leuven,
Belgium

Frank Simon Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

Maarten Simons Laboratory for Education & Society, KU Leuven, Leuven,
Belgium

Richard Smith School of Education, University of Durham, Durham, UK

Paul Standish University College London, Institute of Education, London, UK

Chapter 2

At the Intersection of Anecdotal Stories and Great Narratives: Reflections on the Cooperation Between Educational Historians and Educational Philosophers

Marc Depaepe and Frank Simon

The quantitative and anti-anthropocentric orientation of the natural sciences from Galileo on forced an unpleasant dilemma on the humane sciences: either assume a lax scientific system in order to attain noteworthy results, or assume a meticulous, scientific one to achieve results of scant significance.

(Carlo Ginzburg, 1992, p. 124)

Abstract Partly based on our publications in the series of Smeyers and Depaepe, but also on our experiences and discussions within the underpinning Research Community, we present in this chapter some meta-reflections on the potentialities of the history of education as a scientific discipline. First, we focus on the cooperation of educational historians and educational philosophers in the Research Community. What did we learn from each other? One of the things we hoped to acquire from the dialogue with philosophy was more theoretical depth – an argument that is further developed on the basis of the concept “grammar of educationalisation”. However, the openness towards more theory in history should not exclude attention to the specific and unique in the always changing nature of the historically conditioned situation. On the contrary, as is shown in the final paragraph, the awareness of “presentism” in educational discourse is one of the lasting values of educational historiography.

M. Depaepe (✉)
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Kulak Kortrijk Campus, Kortrijk, Belgium
e-mail: Marc.Depaepe@kuleuven.be

F. Simon
Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium
e-mail: Frank.Simon@Ugent.be

© Springer International Publishing AG, part of Springer Nature 2018
S. Ramaekers, N. Hodgson (eds.), *Past, Present, and Future Possibilities for Philosophy and History of Education*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94253-7_2

By Way of Introduction

The authors in question have always regarded a *Festschrift* as a good opportunity to discuss their joint track record with the academic being honoured. While Marc Depaepe's relationship with Paul Smeyers, who has never concealed his interest in this type of *petite histoire* or anecdotal story, has been more long-standing than Frank Simon's, plenty of common reference points can still be found. Without a doubt, the source lies at the end of the last century, when the *Research Community: Philosophy and history of the discipline of education* was first convened. It met for the first time in Leuven from 18 to 20 October 2000. Subsequently, similar intensive seminars were organised on an almost annual basis, and it is ultimately as a result of these that the initiative arose for this *Festschrift*.

The idea for such a Research Community (RC) was conceived in the Department of Educational Sciences at KU Leuven, largely on the initiative of Paul Smeyers. Smeyers and Depaepe had first met here in the early 1970s, initially as students, subsequently as colleagues, as members of academic staff. They also worked together on the editorial team of the now defunct *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift* (1976–2004), the last generalist periodical on educational research in Flanders. This was the successor of the legendary *Vlaams(ch) Opvoedkundig Tijdschrift* (1919–1955), subsequently renamed *Tijdschrift voor Opvoedkunde* (1955–1975), after successfully merging with more or less like-minded Dutch journals. As researchers and lecturers in the philosophy and history of educational sciences, respectively (and as the occasional co-organisers of the Belgian-Dutch days for pedagogues, which existed for these two foundation disciplines), they witnessed first-hand both the further breakthrough of the empirical approach as the dominant idea in educational research and the associated marginalisation of the philosophical and historical approaches. Incidentally, this scientific evolution was discussed in great detail in the, also since-abolished, specialised courses in the philosophy and history of educational sciences, for which they had also been responsible in Leuven.

It was precisely from within this context that the idea was conceived to re-establish a dialogue between the history and the philosophy of education. These two approaches fortunately remained on the Leuven curriculum as general courses, but they were continuing to grow ever further apart at the international level, not only in terms of scientific organisation (associations, conferences, etc.) but also in terms of paradigm developments (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2015). As we will discuss in more detail below, the history of education had become increasingly "historic" and less "educational" from the 1970s onwards, whereas the philosophy of education seemed much more "philosophical" than before, especially in the minds of historians. This was manifested not just in the language used and the questions raised, but also in the method(s) that were applied. This may also explain why "thoroughbred" philosophers were involved, in 1999, in the establishment of the Leuven-based research community, all the more so given that the application for the required grant from the Research Foundation Flanders had to be submitted by various Flemish universities.

Specifically, the application was filed by Jean-Paul Van Bendegem, a philosopher of science at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Mutatis mutandis the same could be said about the historian Frank Simon of Ghent University, were it not for the fact that he had specialised in the history of education from the outset and had worked together with Leuven from the 1970s onwards in this regard (see Depaepe & Simon, 2009 for further information). The establishment of the RC, for which Frank Simon had taken the initiative with others on behalf of Ghent University, served to lend this cooperation even more depth and lustre, after more than 25 years. Indeed, following Paul Smeyers' transfer, on 1 October 2007, to Ghent University, Frank Simon became his direct colleague in Ghent, albeit only for a couple of years, as he had to retire on 1 October 2009. That did not however prevent him from participating actively in the RC's research and activities, but in more of an advisory capacity.

The RC certainly did not aim to develop a general educational sciences model in line with the German model, founded on a "historic-systematic" method (i.e., with a historical and a theoretical component), which we believe was nevertheless subsequently misunderstood in Germany to be the case (Tenorth, 2015). Nor did this renewed dialogue between educational historians and educational philosophers solely and exclusively limit itself to combating the intrusiveness of the empirical "evidence-based", let alone the psychological research paradigm, even though in some circles it was perceived in that way (compare e.g. Phillips, 2013). In this context, a critical review of this scientific evolution using the tools that both disciplines intrinsically have at their disposal seemed more than sufficient. In addition to this however, there was the fervent hope that all parties could learn from each other even though everyone continued to do his or her own thing; taking account nevertheless of the sometimes great differences in approach within the same discipline, which, given the composition, certainly did not have to be regarded as a monolith. In the realm of the so-called new cultural history of education, for example, there were not only proponents of the "history of the present" model (Popkewitz, 2011, 2013; Priem & Fendler, 2015), which conceives of history in the Foucauldian sense as a discursive strategy, in this new-fangled cultural historiography. But also there were more pragmatically-oriented researchers, who, while going along with the so-called contemporary "turns" in cultural history in general (the visual, the sensorial, the material, the emotional, etc.), attempted to incorporate them critically and heuristically as part of a more sophisticated interpretation, rather than following them slavishly. For all intents and purposes, we regard ourselves as belonging to the latter group (Depaepe & Simon, 2009) although this by no means prevented us from sympathising with the former group, who, with their more theoretical choice for the "grand theory", sometimes came very close to certain educational philosophers (Masschelein & Simons, 2008).

On the contrary. Through the exchange of these diverse points of views between educational philosophers and educational historians (not to mention everything that might lie in between), we were counting on the history of education, traditionally starved of theory, being able to benefit on the theoretical level in a number of ways: for example, regarding the conceptual framework, the concepts used, the underlying

relationship with the theory (including on the sociological level and in terms of the relationship with society), a reflection on how best to deal with the past, the mapping out of historiographical developments and of theoretical and methodological trends and debates, and further interaction with the history of science and knowledge (e.g. Lässig, 2016). These were all matters in which we had already expressed our interest, also outside the RC. In terms of philosophical research in the educational sciences, we above all looked forward to the authors studied being placed in context and possibly also for their claims of absoluteness to be qualified as a result. Such claims do not just colour the “great narratives” of these authors and their theories, but also, often, albeit subconsciously, seem to confer a superior status to philosophy over history.

Did all of this amount to anything? This also appears to be the key question for the editors of this *Festschrift*, to which they also link the hypothesis that the RC’s objectives were barely achieved. They posited in their invitation to contributors that the RC was not capable of influencing mainstream research in the educational sciences. In fact, what happened was worse. Both of these so-called sub-disciplines were further marginalised due to all kinds of developments in science and society – not least those relating to the material conditions in which philosophical and historical research must be conducted in educational institutions. Chairs in both of these disciplines continued to be abolished and they were deemed ever less relevant to and sometimes disappeared altogether from the curricula of teacher training programmes – which have historically always been the cradle of teaching in both these disciplines. Not only did this involve a narrowing of the educational sciences, it also paved the way for the further monopolisation of educational research by the evidence-based paradigm.

Below, we will devote the first part of our reflection to this hypothesis. The editors’ interest, however, extends beyond the occasional contemporary failure of the historical and philosophical approaches in the educational sciences. They also wonder what the lasting value (and therefore also the legitimisation of the *raison d’être*) is of history and of philosophy in education, with a view to safeguarding the future of both of these disciplines. We have also thought and written extensively on this subject, concerning its historical aspect of course, (see e.g. Van Nieuwenhuysse, Simon, & Depaepe, 2015, on which we will base ourselves further for the last part). In a second part of this text, we endeavour to recapitulate a number of our points of view, correlating them with more recent trends in general, cultural historiography, naturally also in relation to the developing social context. The issue of presentism, which is almost inextricably linked to the practice of history, is at the heart of our reflection.

On the Cooperation Between Educational Historians and Educational Philosophers in the RC

Previous writings have already speculated at length on the initial objectives of the RC. We are of the opinion that a distinction should be made between the ambition of enriching one’s own research on the one hand, and the ambition of reorienting mainstream research across the entire field of educational sciences on the other. The latter aspect has never really been on the agenda, certainly as far as educational historians are concerned. At least, not as an effect to be pursued directly. Probably because, as mentioned, educational historiography has found much more of a common ground with social and cultural historiography. In that sense, defining the history of education as a “sub-discipline” of the educational sciences continues to be difficult – although this is something that “pedagogues” usually do. It is possible that the same question can be raised about educational philosophy, but it is not up to us to answer this question. Something we as education historians can do, however, is refer to the 1970s again. As a consequence of the large number of students who enrolled, in Leuven too, in the educational studies programme in the wake of the symbolic (and revolutionary) year of 1968, academic staff worked tirelessly to develop an encyclopaedic structure of the educational sciences. Following such prominent German examples as Friedhelm Nicolin (1969), Smeyers’ supervisor Cyriel C. De Keyser was the great pioneer in Leuven in this regard. In that context, it is also worth comparing his admiration for the much talked about attempt of Wolfgang Brezinka (1972) to transform the largely humanistic *Pädagogik* into an empirical-analytical *Erziehungswissenschaft*, to which educational history was made subordinate, like a sort of “reservoir of hypotheses”. This obviously significantly impeded its pursuit of “emancipation” (cf. Tröhler, 2017). Under such an arrangement, it was not merely hypothetical that a blind spot would develop around the important work that historians themselves had carried out. The history of the child and of youth, which was developed in France among other countries, thanks to “mentality historians” such as Philippe Ariès (see Dekker & Groenendijk, 2012; Van Damme & Simon, 1988/1989), who drew on the *Annales* School for inspiration, is probably a good example of this challenge as it took quite some time before the domain was “appropriated” as such by pedagogues.

Nevertheless, this is not yet any reason to contract out the history of education for good to general, social, and cultural historians. It goes without saying that educational historiography – possibly a better name for the old-fashioned “historical pedagogy” that is still in current use in various Germanic languages – must at least pay attention to the “educational” view. Even though the question of who actually conducts the research, in terms of his or her professional background and training,

continues to be very relevant, all things considered. In this regard, we have advocated for many years now (see the arguments of Depaepe, 2010) in favour of more interdisciplinary cooperation, not just with historians but also with many others, such as anthropologists, sociologists, theologians, literature scientists and ... of course also pedagogues (in all their various sub-specialisms, such as educationalists, special education professionals, social workers) and philosophers (including educational philosophers). It is also important to note that we have *de facto* tried to make this cooperation a reality, and as a result have at the same time demonstrated that historical research does not have to be an individualistic undertaking in and of itself, but can also and equally validly be the subject of real teamwork!

Interdisciplinary cooperation is much more than a buzzword. The history of our discipline shows that substantive and methodological innovations mostly originate from the cross-pollination of various approaches. It hardly need be mentioned that Michel Foucault greatly contributed to a better understanding of the history of education by introducing genealogy in philosophy as a method to underpin critical analysis; not in the least by studying the historic forms of exclusion that coincided with a discourse of normalisation and/or disciplining. Elsa Roland (2017) recently proved how inspiring this can be for the study of educational developments in Belgium in general and those in Brussels in particular. In our view it goes without saying that there is more to this story besides this, for educational historiography. Ultimately, historical educational research involves much more than filling in pre-established frameworks, or whipping up a Foucauldian variant of well-known matters (a practice that is unfortunately seen in South America, where history of education is currently flourishing, as well as even among our own doctoral students now and again). Because these heuristically often very interesting but nonetheless very granular frameworks can often take on a completely different perspective from the viewpoint of history (and of the history of science of educational historiography!). This is especially the case if the handwork that necessarily precedes any development of a historical theory shows that these frameworks are not quite right, and should preferably be replaced with new, more finely-meshed frameworks, that are developed out of educational historiography itself (Tenorth, 1996).

And it is precisely in this regard that the *petites histoires*, for which Paul Smeyers likes to attribute the competence to educational historians, may possibly crop up again. In our opinion, the life and work of less prominent pedagogues – the Ghent lecturer Jozef Emiel Verheyen (Depaepe, Simon, & Van Gorp, 2006), or his colleague in Leuven (and possibly also rival in the struggle over the educational legacy of Ovide Decroly, who will be discussed below) Raymond Buyse (Depaepe, D’hulst, & Simon, 2013), to name but two, are a good example of such anecdotal stories. Often their opinions are connected with very specific events in their lives. Ten years ago, Depaepe (2007) attempted to demonstrate this, on Smeyers’ request, regarding the relationship of educational history with educational philosophy, also on the basis of Foucault’s biography (including his relationship with the above-mentioned Ariès). History’s statements do not primarily focus on the timeless (or non-contemporary) and therefore potentially “nomothetic” aspect of things. Quite the opposite in fact: it zooms in on the contemporary, the specific or (unique) and

therefore always the changing nature of the historically conditioned situation. That is why it also prefers an ideographical approach (following the centuries-old dichotomy that Wilhelm Windelband and, in his footsteps, Wilhelm Dilthey, established between the *erklären* of the natural sciences and the *verstehen* of the humanities (see Kleinberg, 2016 and further regarding the implications of the research in terms of education, Smith & Keiner, 2015)). In this context, the acceptance of a scientifically weaker status, as indicated in the opening quote by Carlo Ginzburg (1992), does not so much constitute a logical consequence as an implication that must be socially defended. After all, the reputation and prestige of a scientific discipline are not first and foremost related to processes that are internal to science, but to factors that are social and therefore *de facto* external to science, such as a person’s professional status and career. This can also be illustrated with the emergence of the seemingly very successful empirical movement in the educational and educational psychological sciences (Depaepe, 1993).

But we digress. Let us return to the more finely-meshed conceptual frameworks of educational history, which we hoped would acquire more theoretical depth as a result of the confrontation with educational philosophers in the RC. One of these frameworks related to the “grammar of schooling” – a conceptual key developed at Stanford by Larry Cuban, David Tyack, and William Tobin – to better understand the resistance to innovation in education. When applied to the history of primary education in Belgium, from the end of the nineteenth century to well into the twentieth century, we had developed an educational complement for this – “the grammar of educationalisation” (sometimes also translated as “grammar of pedagogisation”, and possibly even most precisely as “grammar of educationalising”) (see Depaepe & Smeyers, 2008). In brief, the possible added value of both these “grammars” resides in the fact that their starting premise is educational practice in schools. The difference between the first and the second is primarily related to the aspects they cover. “Schooling” refers to the hard cores and patterns of the formal educational game that the teacher and the pupil play every day in class, whereas educationalisation is much more interested in the underlying moral-educational meaning that must be used to explain behaviour in school.

Our question about a more substantiated use of the concept of “educationalisation” in any event lay at the basis of one of the RC’s meetings. In addition, we published a themed issue of *Educational Theory*, as well as a book in the RC series. We consider the fact that the concept thus became more commonplace, thanks to the intervention of David Labaree (2008), in the USA and more particularly at Stanford as our own modest contribution, which may serve to qualify the idea of “grammar of schooling” developed there. For all clarity, we must nevertheless add that this “educationalisation” has been interpreted in many different ways right up to the present day, despite the demand for further theoretical reflection (Bürgi, 2016; Heinze, Witte, & Rieger-Ladich, 2016; Tröhler, 2017) and is still for the most part used as an umbrella term. But the fact that the introduction to that themed issue was recently translated into Portuguese (Depaepe & Smeyers, 2016), demonstrates that the RC’s activities did not go entirely unnoticed, at least within the boundaries of its own disciplines. This claim can be easily demonstrated with the themed issue that

the *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* devoted to the Leuven initiative. Besides the reflections of the initiators and the above-mentioned commentary by Tenorth (2015), RC members also published a further two articles on the subject (Priem & Fendler, 2015; Smith & Keiner, 2015). Indeed, Priem and Fendler (2015) refer to the same relationship between educational history and educational philosophy – a relationship which, according to the title, probably oscillates somewhere between a rational divorce and a *mariage d'amour*. Regardless, their essay argues strongly in favour of more “permeability” between the two. That greater permeability must help understand the historical entanglement of the methodologies and analytical instruments used by researchers, including among others our representations of “transfer”, “adaptation”, “hybridity”, “translation”, etc. At the same time, it can also inspire us to make a more balanced and ethically responsible choice between these methodologies, from a philosophical point of view. Masschelein and Simons (2008), for example, called on educational historians to start their reflections from a specific philosophical, i.e., ascetic ethos, because of discontent and discomfort about the current situation, in a themed issue of the RC in *Paedagogica Historica* (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2008). As a result, philosophy is conceived as an intrinsic educational objective (and not as a doctrine, meta-theory, or method that educational historians should use as a starting premise).

“Proving” that our own research has become more aware of theory thanks to the dialogue with educational philosophers is of course difficult, but we do think this is the case. In any event, this dialogue has encouraged reflection and self-reflection, also in terms of establishing an educational history. When asked how both our disciplines provide arguments, develop rationales and an argumentation, we purposefully chose to take the readers on a visit of the “workshop” of the historical-educational researcher (Depaepe & Simon, 2009). We took a walk down the path that we have covered together since the 1970s, which undoubtedly further increased attention for the possibilities and boundaries of the methods used and for the chosen source material. We considered the intensive RC seminars to be *de facto* intellectual training of the highest level – and we suspect that educational philosophers may have come to the same conclusion. In the themed issue of *Paedagogica Historica* that we mentioned above, Paul Standish (2008) attempted to refute the criticism of the educational historians on the claims to absoluteness of philosophy (perhaps he was arguing against Tröhler, 2007, rather than Depaepe, 2007 – who can say?), by pointing out that the claims system targeted by philosophy was much more differentiated and indescribably more complex than is suggested in this criticism. Others, including Paul Smeyers (2008) himself, meanwhile, seized the diversity of “genres” in educational research as an opportunity to argue in favour of methodological pluralism. The study of education covers various forms of knowledge, depending on its objectives. And, as far as the interpretative aspect is concerned, to which educational history and educational philosophy belong, a possibly educational focus on the optimisation of practice does not in any way absolve researchers from taking a hygienic approach to empiricism: “The writing of research may be seen as what prevents us from being absorbed in the chaos of unmediated complexity. It allows

us time to think and is performed at some distance in the interests of perspective and justice” (Smeyers, 2008, p. 705; see also Smith & Keiner, 2015).

We can only endorse such ideas. In view of the complexity of the problems analysed on the one hand and the limited nature of our knowledge and expression skills on the other, we have always argued in favour of multiple perspectives on educational history. Furthermore we also learned – something that undoubtedly is also the RC’s merit – that scientific debates should preferably be stripped of their evangelising, yes, often even missionary, aim to disseminate the “conviction that only we are right”. A dialogue with others does not always have to be aimed in the first place at convincing the other, let alone converting him or her to one’s own viewpoint. Listening is an option too. And learning to live with the diversity of opinions and points of view. Anyone who demonstrates understanding for the perspective from which a certain conviction arose, even from a theoretical-methodological viewpoint, learns to qualify the major debates and also to relativise them. Such an approach does not have to culminate in relativism, it can also result in wisdom. After all, the path that leads to a given paradigm encompasses more than a rational reconstruction of arguments. It also involves countless opinions about how knowledge operates in society.

This constant change in perspective constitutes, at least in our opinion (Depaepe, 2005), an added value that can be obtained through historical educational research. Since the dawn of time, understanding the notion of diversity of points of view has led to wisdom, in the sense that one can understand these viewpoints without having to share them unconditionally. This applies in particular to the history of the science of the educational field, which we have attempted to demonstrate extensively in the RC by focusing on Ovide Decroly (1871–1932) (following from Depaepe, Simon, & Van Gorp, 2003). Thanks to many of our interventions, we succeeded in demystifying the discourse that to date has often been exaggerated regarding this educational innovator. Our aim was not to ridicule him, but precisely to make him more human. Something that was extremely appreciated within the RC by our colleagues from the University of Brussels but also beyond (Roland, 2017). Such a critical voice is very rare in the glorification of the pre-war interest in the child and the innovations in education that followed from this and which were often conceived as the result of a predominantly German-speaking *Reformpädagogik* – as rare in fact as attention to the contribution of French-speaking educational psychology (see e.g., Barz, 2017; Németh, Stöck, & Vincze, 2017).

Mutatis mutandis we have attempted to do the same in regard to the now very popular heritage education in general and the commemoration of the war in particular. Here too we estimate that historical research can help deflate many myths and much rhetoric, although one still often runs the risk of stepping on people’s toes when working in the field with the custodians of this heritage. The handling of the “matter” of the museum of education in Ypres, which was painful for us, and which ended with its closure in spite of our arguments within the RC to maintain it (Depaepe & Simon, 2016), abundantly proves this. And indeed so does the answer about the term “dark tourism”, which was formulated outside our discipline, and

rejected by the heritage supporters as being disrespectful and even offensive to the many “pious pilgrims” (Dendooven, 2017).

We think that the historical-educational discipline’s lasting value for the future resides in the critical-constructive corrective against such contemporary discourses, which usually rely on the political, social, and cultural self-interest of certain groups and individuals in society to gather steam. We will discuss this shortly. Like every other historical approach in and of itself, it can act as a dam against the dangers of any presentist attitude whatsoever (Rüsen, 2017). It goes without saying that such a presentist attitude is rife in times of post-truth and a so-called “alternative” view of the past. The reference to the very simple, ahistorical, and atheoretical way of thinking, which suits sponsors and politicians like Trump in equal measure in a neoliberal setting (and which therefore also encourages one-sided “fact”-oriented research, see among others Depaepe, 2017) is sufficient for the time being. With Latour (2017, p. 53) we can qualify this as “post-political” disdain for the world, including the denial of the effective problems that threaten our planet. This, in turn, according to Latour, appeals to the role of the historical researcher as a public intellectual. He or she should engage in the public debate – more than is customary – something that philosophers (including educational philosophers) probably find utterly normal (Masschelein & Simons, 2008), but which causes reticence in a large number of historians (including educational historians). And yet they too can anticipate historical anniversaries, be alert to current issues that require a more global context, and make themselves heard through social media, with critical remarks and questions ... not least when the often complex historical background is mocked, whether consciously or not. Which seamlessly brings us back to the problem of presentism.

The Awareness of Presentism in the Educational Discourse as One of the Lasting Values of Educational History

While the notion of “presentism” can ultimately be qualified as “slippery, amorphous and polyvalent” (Walsham, 2017), this “problem” (Hartog, 2012, 2013), historically speaking, is very closely linked to the almost unshakeable belief in social progress (Coss, 2017). Since the emergence of a largely Eurocentric idea of “modernity”, (Western) society has constantly changed, an idea that was above all propagated and achieved in the eighteenth century. Whereas continuity especially was the norm under the *Ancien Régime*, change became the main characteristic of the moderns. Awareness of the huge fracture between past and present took shape in a new understanding of reality, which was no longer seen as virtually timeless and unchanging, but rather as a process of constant evolution and even revolution. The consciousness of the fact that there was a gaping gulf between the past and modern times gave rise from the end of the eighteenth century to a “modern” “historical consciousness”, or consciousness that the past has ended for good and is thus different from the present (Tollebeek, 2002).

The pace of this change increased constantly during the past 250 years. Moreover, according to Rosa (2005), this process of permanently accelerating change is driven first and foremost by the economic logic of capitalism in which time is money, and money a scarce commodity. There can be no excuse for losing time and so it must be used “productively”. At the same time, however, the capitalist system creates a feeling of alienation, or at times even unease, uncertainty. The wave of economic, social, and cultural change creates a rift with the familiar world view and brings with it a loss of footing. This sets the scene for a harking back to the past, and it does so in numerous ways. It can take the form, for example, of a nostalgic, fervent, and comforting desire for the past, or of a *historia magistra vitae* for the present, a past from which lessons must be learned, or a past recoverable through heritage to serve present political, social, and educational ends. In other words, the past is used in an instrumental manner to draw “lessons” for the present, or to form good citizens rather than critical disciplinary thinkers. As we have already mentioned above, we have demonstrated this in various publications, both in the framework of the history of the origin of the traditional history of education and in the framework of today’s history education (compare Van Nieuwenhuysse, Simon, & Depaepe, 2015 whose key ideas we will use below).

Nevertheless, we would like to briefly discuss this in more detail, to refine the discussion with educational philosophers further. Because the complaint that the (for the most part recent) past is mobilised and reformulated in presentism “*selon les urgences du jour*” (Roussio, 2012) possibly still applies to some approaches in education. Take, for example, the notion of creativity, which is understood in today’s neoliberal society more and more as “entrepreneurship”. On the other hand – and Lynn Fendler (2008) strongly emphasised this in her contributions to the RC based on an approach founded on a *history of the present* – presentism may also have a positive side. As the influence of the present on the view of the past is a *conditio sine qua non* that the historical researcher cannot ignore, we must first and foremost be aware of this problem. Such a “strategic” presentism, which “consciously” considers the contemporary assumptions in their literal sense can undoubtedly raise questions about the complacency or the self-declared evidence of certain pedagogical interventions that are deemed natural. Moreover this puts the various technologies of the pedagogical intervention (which not only manifest themselves in educational practice but also in the language used and in the associated *ways of thinking*) into perspective. We can, after all, walk back down the path from the present to the past. This is called to “*reiterate*”. And this is the number one key verb we use to indicate how we must find out which path was covered, against the chronology of time, to arrive at the present. And how it became “genealogical”. But such a “strategic” presentism, in any event, can in principle always be distinguished from what we can call “crude” presentism, which starts from a simplistic, linear and/or finalistic relationship between the past, present, and future. Unlike the strategic approach, this crude or, perhaps better said, unconscious presentism takes no account whatsoever of the complexity with which these three dimensions of time in human life are linked to each other.

It's true that people live in the present, but that doesn't mean that they're unaware of their past. They constantly carry the traces of the past with them, while so-called plans for the future are often constructs that are attributed to the present or past, albeit *a posteriori*, precisely because they want to introduce coherence and rationality in their own life histories. Through memory, individuals store not only knowledge, but also experience of things that have happened, and they incorporate these memories constantly in the living of their life. Every individual, and by extension society as a whole, approaches the past from some perspective or other, then attempts to reconstruct it and, in doing so, attribute meaning to it (Jenkins, 2009). One significant dimension of a "complete" historical consciousness is therefore that one learns to recognise the status of knowledge of the past and use of the past, and learns to assess its value. In the end, a historian works not on the past as such, but on "time", as Bantigny (2013) contended a few years ago, and this category has an inherent leaning towards the constant interplay of the past, present, and future dimensions.

In that sense it is certainly good to know that working with historical *exempla* (initially taken as positive, but after the two World Wars often also as negative examples, opening the "hunt" for the "blemished" past) in academic historiography, including in educational historiography, was purposefully eschewed in the last decades of the previous century (Jensen, Leerssen, & Mathijssen, 2010). Gradually researchers turned their backs on the nineteenth-century "utilitarian" perspective (which, in the history of education as such was above all interested in citizenship building in the emerging nation state, whereas the formation of "educatorship" would have played a central role in that same context in the history of education, cf. Bruter, 2012; Gautherin, 2002). First and foremost, they traded it in for a more "realistic" perspective, which attempted to approach history again on its own terms and in its own right; subsequently, under the influence of post-modernism, for an increasingly expanding epistemology of "multi-perspectivism", in which knowledge of the past was inevitably regarded as interlinked with the historian's current perspective, both with the perspectives and the cultural representations of the historical actors themselves (Munslow, 1997).

The fundamental problem, however, is that the historical culture as a whole in society did not follow or barely followed the academic historiography in that self-reflective, multi-perspectivist discourse. This has created an increasingly large gulf between the two as the *common sense* continues to swear by a utilitarian epistemology (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998; Samuel, 1994). The prevailing discourse of the ordinary man in the street, and of policy-makers, who rely on them for their vote in the short term, stopped short at a profitability aimed at utility and profit. As a result, in-depth cultural-historical research was perceived by society perhaps not as ballast but as a superfluous luxury. Judging by the flourishing remembrance sites on the internet, we might even say that remembering now appears to have become more important than the writing of history. Besides personal remembrance, collective remembrance is growing strongly in importance. Since the fall of Communism, and increasing globalisation and associated migrations, governments around the world have been giving an ever more prominent role to a shared knowledge of the past, for

the purposes, yet again, of citizenship and identity formation. Here too in Flanders, this trend currently takes shape in the requirement, in the above-mentioned cross-curricular attainment targets, of what is known as "remembrance education" and "heritage education". This trend has also become the subject of a genuine heritage industry and remembrance or commemoration management. Heritage experts, who come together in heritage units, search out on our behalf the things that need to be preserved, the sites of our archaeological heritage that are deserving of protection. This planned and ready-made "remembering" (and its correlative, planned and ready-made "forgetting") naturally implies the cultivation of a sort of public history. Consciously wishing to remember is part of the development of the new identity-formers' dispositive power. We mustn't lose the things that are important to our cultural identity. Or that can help develop a desired framework of standards and values. This reduces our interaction with the past once again into a very selective and instrumental event, based on current objectives. Only those aspects of the past that are of service and of use today are retained, or so it seems. The logic used in the process of giving meaning to the past is a present-oriented logic, which is not that of the past itself. This leads not only to a highly selective, but also a very context-bare interaction with the past. This is because past events are no longer studied in their own space and time, but only for their use to modern society, where the historic context no longer plays a meaningful role (Van Nieuwenhuysse & Wils, 2012). Also, concern for heritage and the act of remembrance associated with it is mainly a strategy in, of, and for the present – a regime of temporality that is omnipresent in our society (compare Hartog, 2012, but also Patrimoine, 2018), partly through fear of an uncertain future, that we naturally create ourselves.

Nevertheless, historical understanding, also in relation to education and teaching, precisely goes, in our view, beyond the limited view of present time by making it clear among other things that the prevailing impulse towards utility is still part of the lengthy process of modernisation. As a result it also holds open the door, albeit theoretically, to the above-mentioned "critical correction", which could exist from the cultivation of the culture of the non-utilitarian. All in all this amounts to the construct of a historical science "with a human subject that discovers the past as people construct it" (after Barros in Depaepe, 2005, p. 57) – which again involves a consciousness of our own relativity (and the discretion associated with this), because it is largely in relation to this that historical consciousness can serve as an antidote to the reign of the immediately useable. The science of history in general, and the science of the history of education in particular, can hardly be reduced to a supplier of academic speeches on the anniversaries of educational institutions (Coss, 2017). Historians of education are certainly not usually the first speakers organisers think of because if they really take their (self-)critical task to heart – we are talking from some experience of our own – they often run the risk of being regarded as a "thorn in one's side". Because an analysis that is divergent from the prevailing opinion, which dares to build a dam against the ever-encroaching category of the past and contradict the opinions of trend-watchers and experience experts that are not always as insightful as they seem, even though these experts increasingly seem to have the last word on everything in our society, will obviously

inspire a sense of discomfort. This critical analysis usually does not mesh with the simple story that ordinary citizens wish to hear as “consumers” of this history of the past because of its qualifications and relativisations. As we already mentioned, we do not think it is possible to draw direct lessons from the past for the future, given the variations in contexts and epochs.

But heritage, remembrance, and commemoration can be used alongside research to give people a better understanding of the past, and on that basis to set them thinking, always mindful of the historical contexts. They will undoubtedly offer inspiration to reflect on educational processes without immediately wishing to evaluate or condemn them – or as Spinoza judiciously noted in 1675 in his *Tractatus Politicus*: “*Non ridere, non lugere, neque detestari, sed intelligere*” (“not to ridicule, not to bewail, not to scorn, but to understand”). And this understanding, whether we like it or not, usually starts with “anecdotal” histories, rather than with “great” narratives.

It may well be the case, to paraphrase Hartog (2013, pp. 28–36), that Mnemosyne (the Titaness who was the personification of memory in Greek mythology) has taken the place of her daughter Clio, and that history will ultimately return as a history of the memory, of remembrance. Gaining an understanding of the making of history, of the tensions between present and past, of the use of the past and of interaction, is by no means a superfluous luxury. Instead it is a daily undertaking, that we continue to work on with pleasure with a view to the future. Or as Catherine Hall (2017, pp. 262–263) once expressed it so aptly: “Embracing the possibility of thinking more critically, reflecting dialectically on the relation between past, present and future, probing the silences and absences in the archives, being self-conscious about the limitations imposed on us by the present we inhabit, engaging with politics of changing the course of history by writing about it – that seems a kind of work worth doing” – a sentiment we wholeheartedly hope Paul Smeyers will echo as he commences his retirement.

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