
EDITORIAL

SOCIAL CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

TO TEACHING IN THE

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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At the start of the twenty-first century societies are undergoing a series of transformations that are both broad, profound and closely interrelated. One of them relates to the invention and expansion of new information and communication technologies. Their emergence undoubtedly provides numerous opportunities and certain risks for education worldwide. Taking advantage of the opportunities and avoiding or reducing the pitfalls has to do with both objective and subjective issues.

The objective issues include the availability of resources for purchasing equipment, keeping it up-to-date and training the approximately 65 million teachers in the world in its intensive use.

The subjective issues include the place granted to these technologies in the new educational paradigms, the attitude towards them, the creativity and the political and business will to generate more options at lower than current costs.

The text by José Joaquín Brunner in this issue of *Prospects* analyses the characteristics of these transformations and proposes different hypotheses regarding future world scenarios depending on how these issues evolve.

But the challenges connected with the invention and expansion of the new information and communication technologies are also associated with an intense process of renewed pedagogical thinking worldwide. At the centre of this process of renewal lies the development of 'pedagogical constructivism'. Related to the theories of the New School at the turn of the last century, constructivism investigates, on the one hand, the processes of personal construction of knowledge in general and in association with intentional and—in particular—school interventions, and on the other proposes new orientations.

The *Open File* prepared by Jean-Jacques Ducret offers a number of articles mostly from the colloquium on ‘Constructivisms: Uses and Perspectives in Education’, organized from 4 to 8 September 2000 by the Educational Research Service of the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland, with the support of the Jean Piaget Archives Foundation. The articles are set within the overall framework of the contributions to the colloquium and combined with contributions from renowned researchers from the South who were unable to participate in such a significant meeting, but who have added their reflections.

The articles presented by Jean-Jacques Ducret include issues as varied as learning numeracy, language and science—all top priorities. They involve both children in the process of constructing their knowledge and teachers challenged by the new situations and theories. They go into universally relevant issues from the perspective of authors from such diverse contexts as France, Japan, Switzerland and Zambia.

Finally, a profile of the Indian educator J. Krishnamurti sets side by side concerns for knowledge, concerns for values and good and concerns for the new technologies and the construction of knowledge.

Therefore, the overall purpose of this number of *Prospects* is to draw attention to elements associated with the three axes of one of the triangles linked with the quality of education for all in the twenty-first century: technologies—knowledge—values. Undoubtedly the way these elements are combined (the dynamics of the triangle) will be decisive in shaping education during the coming decades. On the one hand, that shape will be influenced by the direction of whatever social changes occur outside education but, at the same time, it will be able to exert some influence on them.