
EDITORIAL

Cecilia Braslavsky

This special issue of *PROSPECTS* addresses some of the matters which will be discussed during the forty-sixth session of the International Conference of Education (Geneva, 5–8 September 2001). It represents a collection of articles—philosophical reflections, results of research, discussions and innovative experiences—which, alongside the Conference’s own documents, should stimulate the debate and contribute to making the twenty-first century a **century of lifelong equitable education of quality that improves our ability to live together**. This collection concerns, in particular, such issues as new world trends and educational needs, citizenship education, education for social cohesion, cultural diversity and education, language teaching, science teaching, new technologies and the future of the school. Each of these papers, in its way, is related to the common concern shared by educationists around the world and outlined in the article by John Daniel, UNESCO’s Assistant Director-General for Education.

All the articles are professional contributions that—hopefully—can help break the ice on awkward issues. At the same time, they are all to some extent controversial. But there is no reason to fear controversy. It is only if the educational community succeeds in using well-founded arguments to reach a basic consensus admitting diversity that it will be able to deal with the challenges of peace and justice facing societies in the twenty-first century.

A Swiss scholar, Uri Peter Trier, put on his futurologist’s hat to share with us his vision of the place that education will occupy in the new society and of the necessary educational policies. He sets the improvement of the living conditions for each individual as the precondition for them being able to shape their own future, and he underlines that, in reality, ‘societies move education more than education moves societies’.

Are ‘democracy’, ‘civic rights and responsibilities’ and other ‘big words’ like this only the concern of adults? What do teenagers think of all this and how do they see their role in maintaining democratic political structures and civil society? These questions were the focus of a Civic Education Study conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement in the 1990s. The results of this grand and serious

survey are presented on our pages by Judith Torney-Purta, Professor at the University of Maryland, who chaired the study's International Steering Committee.

In his article on humanitarian law, Sobhi Tawil, from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), reviews the ways in which schooling, in unintended ways, may act as a catalyst to armed conflict, before focusing on the ways in which the experience of armed conflict and humanitarian law may contribute to the core content of basic education. It is argued that the exploration of ethical issues related to human behaviour in times of armed conflict and war can be an important contribution to global citizenship education and to strengthening social cohesion in the twenty-first century.

This paper by Tawil, which tackles rather extreme situations, is followed by an article by Joan Holt from the Australian Curriculum Corporation. This year marks the Centenary of Australia becoming a nation and the author speaks of the renaissance in teaching about civics and citizenship in her country through the *Discovering Democracy* programme, funded by the Commonwealth Government. The author states that, if this curriculum development programme succeeds, Australians will not need another public education campaign before they celebrate their next civic anniversary.

Winthrop Wiltshire from Trinidad and Tobago describes the situation in the Caribbean where the greatest threat to social cohesion appears to be the increasing levels of societal crime and violence. He regrets that the education system in the region has so far been concerned mainly with the academic performance of students and has paid little attention to their emotional needs—the area in which, Wiltshire argues, the school has a key role to play. He feels that the change of emphasis from a shortsighted academic approach to a more holistic model of education is required.

The report on teacher education for social cohesion in the Indian context was written by J.C. Rajput and K. Walia. It offers an exhaustive overview of the development of the school system in modern India, notes many achievements, but at the same time shares concerns, in particular in connection with the 'emergence of schools for the rich and affluent', which are perceived as an obstacle to the 'education for inclusion'.

The development of positive attitudes among future teachers towards pupils from different ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious groups was the final goal of an investigation undertaken in South Africa, the results of which are presented by Corinne Meier and Eleanor Lemmer. The survey has clearly revealed the need for multicultural teacher training promoting tolerance of diversity and the reduction of prejudice based on stereotypes. However, while it is encouraging that respondents to the survey rejected segregation as a

solution in multicultural schools, the differentiation between the learning aptitudes of pupils from different groups and the attribution of learning problems to different causes is worrying.

When the issue of language teaching is raised, in particular that of national language, one usually immediately thinks of rare languages or dialects threatened by the advance of their more widely used ‘competitors’. The paper by Samba Traoré from Mali shares with us an interesting experience of his country in this area—the use of a convergent pedagogy, an innovative approach to language teaching in a bi- or multilingual context aimed at the development of functional bilingualism in a learner. This innovation, first tried out in the town of Ségou in Mali, has greatly improved the performance of students in the experimental classes compared with those in the regular ones.

Jens Naumann and Peter Wolf deal with the analyses of the African systems of primary education in the framework of the activities of PASEC (*Programme d’analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la Conférence des ministres de l’éducation des pays ayant en commun l’usage du français* (CONFEMEN)). Dissatisfied with the current situation and the superfluous nature of most reports, the authors redefine the linguistic variable, economic indicators and the literacy variant in the hope of finding a more convincing distribution of the role and influence of the different explanatory variables. At the same time, they intend to show to what extent the outcomes of statistical analyses and their interpretation depend on both the validity of the starting point and the assumptions about constructivist models of analysis and research procedures applied in this context.

The German professor Jürgen Mittelstrass addresses in his article the issue of new challenges to education and research in a global economy. He states that, in a world oriented by the keyword ‘globalization’, not only are the economic parameters themselves undergoing change, but so also are the conditions for education and research, especially with regard to the connection between them—that is, the system of academic education. He argues that ‘when economy becomes global and research moves in a research triangle without any restrictions, (academic) education has to move out of its disciplinary boundaries’.

There has been much discussion lately about the new technologies, the digital divide, the info-rich and the info-poor. Clotilde Fonseca from Costa Rica reflects about the myths and the goals of the ICTs in education, and on ways of constructing an educational model which would benefit from their potential to enrich learning.

The two articles published under ‘Trends’ section are both devoted to the same subject: AIDS—our common concern, source of suffering and tragedy. The first paper, contributed by Inon Schenker from the World Health Organization (WHO), describes the

evolution in the development of school-based HIV prevention programmes, the theoretical frameworks on which behavioural change and diffusion of programmes are based, and the existing barriers in implementing them. He also offers several examples of success stories, which highlight the key role of the education sector in helping to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The second article, written by Carol Coombe from South Africa and Michael Kelly from Zambia, address the issue of AIDS and education from a double perspective: education as a vehicle for reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS and education as an institution itself threatened by the disease. The authors *live* the drama of AIDS every day, and their concluding appeal for action cannot leave anyone untouched.

Finally, by including the profile of Margaret Mead in this special issue we wish to honour one of the most significant representatives of the educators attempting to improve the knowledge and respect of diversity as a prerequisite for better contributing to living together. In 2001, the international community of educators celebrates the centennial of Mead's birth. Dr Wilton S. Dillon, Senior Scholar Emeritus at the Smithsonian Institution, Secretary to the International Honorary Committee for the Mead centennial, contributed this paper.

* * *

Altogether, these contributions are aimed at enlarging our capacity to enlighten the concept of learning to live together as one of the main axes of the new paradigm of quality education for the twenty-first century. But they are, moreover, aimed at encouraging a further dialogue and exchange of experiences that would contribute to advance networking in favour of a more effective action towards education for peace, social cohesion linked to the reduction of poverty and intercultural understanding. They are doubtless going to be enriched by the comprehensiveness and variety of the global contributions to the forty-sixth session of the International Conference of Education.