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INTRODUCTION



The relation between education and emancipation: something like water and oil? Introducing the special issue

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ABSTRACT

This issue of *Paedagogica Historica* is a product of the 39th ISCHE Conference, held in Buenos Aires, from 17 to 21 July 2017. For this reason, the journal exceptionally includes articles in Spanish. At the event, 442 papers were presented, distributed in 103 sessions in which 363 participants (271 researchers and 92 students) from 36 countries of the 5 continents participated. The central theme of the Conference – also covered in this issue – was Education and Emancipation.

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Emancipation is a concept of a huge semiotic density and a great capacity for metaphorising. From its more general and abstract aims, to daily decisions about what relationship with knowledge is proposed in school, there is allusion to the broad notion of emancipation.

From the start, emancipatory processes place the issue of schooling at the centre of their concerns. During the formation of new nations, homelands, institutions, and countries, new citizens emerged who distanced themselves from their subordinate status and this process had to be achieved through the massive degree of socialisation that occurs through schooling. But two more processes converged in the emancipatory logic; on the one hand, the ways in which the independent territories would define their organisation and political functioning was still “to be determined”, so the internal political dispute was very strong regarding how governments, regimes, or classes aimed to centralise the conduction and impose their criteria, which gave rise to a variety of autonomic trials, on both a macro and micro scale, which gave practical realisation to this new view of sovereignty. Also, we must not forget a more individual dimension. In the early stages of schooling, what was known as the “teaching dispositif” was the catechism: a form of enunciation where, at the front of the room, the teacher-pastor read aloud from a book and these words would be repeated loudly

by the audience. In the years that followed, the relative expansion of printing made possible the slow production of texts that could be read individually, in solitary and solipsist access, by students and future citizens. Citizenship, autonomisation, and individuation are crucial concepts that went through the theoretical reflection and training practices surrounding the emancipation-education link.

The articles included in this special issue reflect on these topics. The conceptual dimension of emancipation, its connection with racial and ethnic debates, the existence of travellers and international fairs, school architecture, and the recognition of bodies, school texts, conceptions of childhood, students and teachers, and the mass media, among others. All of these topics demonstrate the presence and power of these debates in general principles and in daily decisions.

Our societies have maintained debates about these tensions and problems, ever since the Enlightenment promoted the ideal of emancipation, guiding the population to use their own reason to interrupt other people's tutelage. These tensions have been present since the great national systems of education began to develop along with various ideals and practices that continue to govern in the present day. Likewise, from as early as the twentieth century, the limitations and constraints that hindered autonomy and sovereignty were evident in the educational systems fostered by the Enlightenment. Within these systems, the constitution of a non-emancipated subjectivity was strengthened. However, simultaneously, it was also evident that not every formative intervention carried out by an individual – such as a teacher – in the education of another person, becomes an act opposed to emancipation. That is to say, it does not follow that the only possibility of an emancipatory education was that of individual learning. The most important factor in determining the possibility of a more autonomous development was the logic that organised that relationship, the position from where people interpellated each other.

Nevertheless, emancipation of the individual recalls Kant's famous words about the Enlightenment and the courage to dare to think – words that have been repeated and paraphrased time and time again. Yet, one of the most ironic paradoxes of the history of education is that almost all ideological and political systems, whatever their nature, have tried to impose their values and norms by disciplining individuals through schooling. In this sense, schools were considered powerful instruments in socialising people according to the ideological or political preferences of the system.¹

Does that mean that education and emancipation are related to each other like water and oil? Not necessarily. Take for example the case of Simón Rodríguez (1769–1854). The liberating imperative and tensions surrounding emancipation converged to a point of special condensation in his thoughts. Simón Rodríguez was a teacher, Simón Bolívar's teacher. His proposal “we invented or we err” is especially productive and multidimensional. This affirmation, which has been frequently referenced as a political autonomist principle, proposed to establish the bases of peoples that broke their colonial relations, developing new, native, or autonomous experiences far from the imitation of pre-existing models. However, we are interested in focusing on the pedagogical dimension of that appeal to invention. In particular, the pedagogy that

¹See, among others, Marc Depaepe and Karen Hulstaert, “Demythologizing the Educational Past: An Attempt to Assess the ‘Power of Education’ in Congo (DRC) with a Nod to the History of Interwar Pedagogy in Catholic Flanders,” *Paedagogica Historica* 51 (2015): 1–2, 11–29.

occurs in new searches and inventions, that is strengthened by facing obstacles, that is revived because what works should not work; a pedagogy that moves from its place, that seeks to reach where it has not been able to reach, and, in this way, reinvents itself.

Revisiting Rodríguez may allow us to think of a notion of emancipation as formation, which does not refer to a final form according to a fixed model, nor a state of arrival, but to a continuous and unfinished process. For example, Rodríguez questioned the evolutionist views on childhood that supposed that only in adulthood would one be able to reflect. He argued that these views produced hierarchies and disagreements.

Simón Rodríguez received his education from the streets and wanted to bring this knowledge into the schools. That pedagogy involved an interpellation to different discourses or formative poles; referential and – at the same time – contingent and precarious. Besides the school discourse, it is necessary to recognise other discourses that interpellated subjective formation: that of the popular market, the reality of the streets, communal life, communicative practices, and so on. Included in this is a recognition of the concrete subjects, their knowledge and experiences; recognition of someone who is a *partenaire*,² who is granted equal honour and considered capable of playing the same game, and playing well. Also present is the sense of belonging to a common field that, as Bourdieu warns, is not reduced to the politics of giving, which goes from gift to debt. This includes open and precarious formative experiences and the emergence of other referents – not only adults, parents, or teachers, but other diverse social actors. To teach, Rodríguez does not propose any body of ideas; no doctrine that must be learnt. Teachers are not “trainers of conscience”; the content of education is inherent to its form. It raises the question of the difference between transmitting knowledge – carried out by teachers whom he calls “teachers horn” – or teaching for life; teachers who teach to live, a vital knowledge, an experience-based knowledge. His emancipatory view begins by recognising the social environment not as something that “gets in the windows” in educational institutions, but as something that acts in the daily struggle for the meaning of life, experience, and the world. Rather, the plot or the cultural warp, which is part of the daily reinvention of life.

The purpose was to emphasise those multiple forms of conditioning, neither good nor bad, yet diverse throughout life, which were articulated through actions, decisions, and practices that shape people’s training. Therefore, he argued that the secret to being a good teacher was to look with wide eyes at the students who listen to him, to be receptive to this observation, attend to it, nurture it, appreciate it; it is rather a matter of attention and sensitivity.

This practice of recognising others highlights the problem of cultural differences. Schools founded by Rodríguez combine the Spanish language with the languages of indigenous peoples; all languages must be learned by all. During such interaction, a laborious process of recognition and intercultural construction of “a new us” begins. The schools considered “general”, “common”, “popular”, and “social” are the ones that integrate knowledge and life; it is the entire body of people who must integrate the universe of knowledge. Starting from the opposite, focusing on the inability of some – always the same – consolidates the colonial order. Without eliminating the dominant language – which is also a native language – it becomes a forgotten vocabulary, a language that must be learned together with that of the coloniser.

²Pierre Bourdieu, *El sentido práctico* (Madrid: Taurus, 1991 [1980]).

Along with this, the voices of teachers and students should be considered as a set of multifaceted instruments through which they created dialogue, read, experienced, and understood the world; the way in which they recorded their experiences even before education “taught” them how to write these down. In other words, the voices create a way to recognise the “vocabulary universe” of others; the words they use to name experiences and describe the world.

Among those experiences was a hospitality school that offered hygiene, clothing, food, and decent bedrooms. The school taught basic skills along with how to work the land and how to work with wood and metal, to boys and girls alike. It provided an occupation for parents who could work and give assistance to invalids. It offered land to the most excluded, the native owners and – at the same time – the dispossessed; a worthy context in which to learn to perceive each other as equals, as inhabitants of the same world.³

What an educator undoubtedly teaches is a relationship with knowledge, and in such a fascinating and vital manner that students are driven to love it. The teacher knows what he or she teaches but, fundamentally, he or she strives to develop a will to know and understand what is known. Rodríguez emphasises: “to educate is to create wills.” The art of teaching has three parts – according to Rodríguez – and each one of those parts is a way of working on the student’s attention. The teacher must seek the attention of his or her students and, at the same time, go out to meet, disturb, and invite that attention to focus on what it is necessary to criticise, understand, think, and invent. That was the way in which Rodríguez distinguished his notion of school within his view “we invented or we err”, in order to realise an emancipatory school.

The articles in this special issue provide us with different ways in which inventions have produced an educational climate and have been involved in various aspects of the diversity of meanings deployed around the notion of emancipation. This is achieved through resituating them in other periods and contexts, placing them in contrast with new problems, and revealing new concepts that were not included in the first forms of emancipation. In short, the articles introduce a set of expressions that give new vigour and depth to a signifier that has been active among our communities for three centuries.

In the article “Del término descolonizar y sus derivas pedagógicas”, Inés Fernandez Moujan (re)visits the ideas of Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) and his intellectual influence on Paulo Freire’s thoughts. The intention of the article is to analyse the influences of Fanon, and the decolonisation–liberation dichotomy, as an inescapable reference. It is a contribution that systematises debates on decolonisation and clarifies its incidence of liberation pedagogy. In addition, Crain Soudien analyses how the Social Darwinist thinking of white supremacy came to be institutionalised in law in South Africa. The article “Institutionalising Racial Segregation in the South African School: The School Board Act, 1905” argues that the School Board Act contains one of the first constitutive moves that were made in the South Africa that was to emerge with the Act of Union in 1910 with respect to classification, ranking, and ordering in the country’s long history of racial division.

On the other hand, in her article Lilli Riettiens explores how during the so-called century of travelling, many Creole travellers went on a journey from Latin America to

³Kohan Walter, *Simón Rodríguez. El maestro inventor* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2013).

Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This article “Creole Travellers in the Europe of the Nineteenth century: Education as Topos within Latin-American Post-colonial Emancipation”, outlines travellers’ impact on the construction of (supra) national identities, by highlighting the often alleged duality between “European civility” and “Latin American barbarism” within their travelogues. After a brief description of the processes of nation-building in Latin America, the article focuses on the distinction between “civility” and “barbarism”, as reflected in the travellers’ observations of educational concepts and institutions. In a similar way, the paper “Transnationalizing American Progressivism and Emancipation: Frances B. Johnston at the 1900 Paris Universal Exposition”, written by Sebastien Akira Alix, shows how at the 1900 Paris World’s Fair, Frances Benjamin Johnston, one of America’s first female photographers, played a key role in publicising American progressivism and emancipation in education, in Europe. By displaying numerous photographs taken in public schools in Washington DC, she revealed to the French and international audience how American progressive reformers were aiming to provide a freer, more child-centred, and democratic education to children in the public schools.

Two articles address the theme of architecture and space for education. On the one hand, in his text “The Republican Project and the Scholar Architecture during the Second Half of Nineteenth-century in Campinas: Groups, Projects and Ideas”, Munir Abboud Pompeo Carmargo analyses school architecture in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, as part of national projects of emancipation, eradication of illiteracy, and the establishment of conditions for certain cultural developments. In that context, the article shows how school facilities – considering that these buildings present their own meaningful traits connected with their educational goals – target the public and the conceptions of the individuals or groups involved. On the other hand, in “Los espacios recreativos a principios del siglo XX en la capital Argentina. Problemas, tensiones y pugnas sobre los múltiples sentidos de la diferencia sexual”, Pablo Scharagrodsky explores how some actors and social groups developed recreational spaces for children. However, the purposes and meanings in circulation started to collide depending on the social group of origin, the ideologies, and the manner of conceiving “the political thing”. These spaces for socialising set a series of new meanings and ideas about different topics into motion (the “sexual issue” among them).

The theorisation about different dimensions of emancipation in this special issue also includes the topic of the dissemination of ideas through different educational devices. In “Constructing Collective Memory for (De)Colonisation: Taiwanese Images in History Textbooks, 1950–1987”, Hsuan Yi Huang analyses Taiwanese history textbooks during the martial law period (1950–1987) to explore narratives about Taiwan and examines the ways in which those narratives as a collective memory created particular images of Taiwan. In “In the Interest of the Child: Psychiatry, Adoption, and the Emancipation of the Single Mother and Her Child – The Case of the Netherlands (1945–1970)”, Nelleke Bakker focuses on the impact of psychiatry and the legalisation of adoption in 1956 on the emancipation of the single mother and her child. The paper argues that the release of single motherhood and illegitimacy from the moral-religious stigmata of a “sinful fallen woman” and a “damned” or “degenerated” child has, in the Dutch case, not proceeded as a linear process. On the other hand, Eduardo Galak and Iván Orbuch explore the mid-twentieth-century Argentinian view of school cinematography as a method of disseminating a pretended ideology, simultaneously

emancipatory and propagandistic. A particular policy is analysed: the *Noticioso* magazine between 1952 and 1955, in which the exponential growth of the state role in the reproduction of educational films, as well as in the filming, distribution, and screening of films, is examined. Through the 1948 creation of the Department of Radio Teaching and Cinematography and the publication of *Noticioso*, the government policies that Peronism forged for political emancipation can be analysed.

Throughout the twentieth century, debates linked the racial, ethnic, aboriginal, and social movements and policies of recognition with the emancipation agenda. This special issue includes Sophie Rudolph's paper "To 'Uplift the Aborigine' or to 'Uphold' Aboriginal Dignity and Pride? Indigenous Educational Debates in 1960s Australia", which was nominated for the Early Career Conference Paper Award. In this paper the author analyses the Black Power movement's influence in a long-standing movement of resistance by Aboriginal people, as well as activist responses to racism. The article focuses on two discourses related to emancipatory goals of marginalised communities. Finally, Alicia Civera Cerecedo presents her paper, "Amidst Exclusion, Promise, and Violence: Rural Normal School Students in Mexico and the Disappearance of 43" which gives us a closer, contemporary, and painful look at a recent heartrending event and its victims. On 26 and 27 September 2014, 43 students from the "Profesor Isidro Burgos" Rural Normal School in Ayotzinapa disappeared, and six people died. In this article, the author analyses the event as the result of long-term historical processes, from the perspective of the social mobilisation that caused the students' disappearance, on one hand, and from the history of rural normal schools, on the other. The starting point is to relocate political history within the history of education in order to understand the agency of political actors in the definition of educational processes, and to question the reciprocal relations between school and state. The disappearance of the 43 rural normal students is the result of a long process of abandonment in the countryside, of discrimination against young people of rural origin and Indians, in the framework of a process of state dismantling, which places teachers and normal students in positions of severe vulnerability. A pedagogy for cultural diversity recognition – a school of hospitality, as we evoked with Simón Rodríguez – with an emphasis on emancipation and rights, once again proves very necessary.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Marc Depaepe (1953) is emeritus professor of history of education at the KU Leuven, where he was deputy chancellor between 2013 and 2017. Since 2005 co-editor-in-chief of *Paedagogica Historica*. Former president of the *International Standing Conference for the History of Education* (1991–1994) and member of the Board of directors of the *International Academy of Education* (since 2012). Published and co-published abundantly on the history of educational and psychological sciences in Europe and the United States; the history of schooling in Belgium (especially primary education); the theory, methodology, and historiography of the history of education as a discipline; the history of colonial education, especially in relation to the former Belgian Congo (1908–1960). In 2015 he was awarded an honorary doctorate at the University of Latvia in Riga.