Demythologizing the Educational Past: An Endless Task in History of Education

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"My life in the history of education"—to borrow the title of a recent British series of scholarly autobiographies[1]—began with a lively interest in educational practice. I became interested in the organization of the subject-based grade-school system and wished to find its origins. This was an organizational form introduced for reasons not particularly educational, and it persisted chiefly because of the order and efficiency to which it gave rise.[2] My work was both a form of educational criticism and a demonstration of the relevance of the history of education to educational science, practice, and policy.

In light of developments in the theory and practice of education history,[3] I was not surprised afterward to find pitfalls in an educationally "relevant" historiography.[4] A purely "extrinsic" relationship between educational history and utility, present or future, endangers the "scientific" claims of history. In education systems founded explicitly in one or another ideology as, for

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[1]See *History of Education Bulletin* 51 (Spring 1993) *et seq.*

[2]For an English summary of this work see M. Depaepe, "The Development of Classes in the Belgian Primary School in the Nineteenth Century," *Rozprawy z Diejów Oswiaty* 25 (1983): 167–78.

[3]See S. Cohen, "The History of the History of American Education, 1900–1976: The Uses of the Past," *Harvard Educational Review* 46 (1976): 298–330; M. Heinemann (ed.), *Die historische Pädagogik in Europa und den U.S.A. Berichte über die historische Bildungsforschung,* 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett Cota, 1979 and 1985); M. M. Compère, *L'histoire de l'éducation en Europe. Essai comparatif sur la façon dont elle s'écrit* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995).

[4]M. Depaepe, "L'Apport de l'histoire de l'éducation à la définition des politiques éducatives. Quelques réflexions méthodologiques," in *L'Offre d'école. Eléments pour une étude comparée des politiques éducatives au dix-neuvième siècle/The Supply of Schooling: Contributions to a Comparative Study of Educational Policies in the Nineteenth Century,* ed. W. Frijhoff (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1983), 15–31; M. Depaepe, "Some Statements About the Nature of the History of Education," in *Why Should We Teach History of Education?,* ed. K. Salimova and E. V. Johanningmeier (Moscow: International Academy of Self-Improvement, 1993), 31–36; M. Depaepe and H. Van Crombrugge, "Using or Abusing the Educational Past? Some Methodological Reflections on the Place of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi in the Educational Historiography," in *Pestalozzi in China: International Academic Symposium on the Occasion of the Publication of Pestalozzi's Selected Works in Chinese, Beijing, 10–14 October 1994,* ed. H. Gehrig (Zürich: Pestalozzianum, 1995), 51–62.

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example, Marxism-Leninism[5] or dogmatic Catholicism,[6] not only was history used (*casu quo* abused) politically, but required also to support a theory of education. This same tendency is still with us. We find it in, among other things, attempts to make good use of the "democratic heritage" of progressive education[7] in former communist countries, in nationally orchestrated attempts to bring Pestalozzi's thought to bear on Chinese literacy campaigns,[8] and in some conservative (White) educational circles in South Africa, where "historical pedagogy" is still used to legitimate traditional educational values.[9]

On the other hand—and leftist revisionism in the United States is a case in point[10]—the question remains whether a neutral and value-free reconstruction of the past is possible. Rather than a methodological fault, "presentism" is supposed to be an unavoidable condition of historical research. Elsewhere[11] I

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[5]See also B. Rang, *Pädagogische Geschichtsschreibung in der DDR. Entwicklung und Entwicklungsbedingungen der pädagogischen Historiographie 1945–1965* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1982).

[6]See, for example, M. Depaepe and F. Simon, "The Conquest of Youth: An Educational Crusade in Flanders During the Interbellum Period," in *Constructing a Cultural History of Schooling: Essays in the History of Education*, ed. T. Popkewitz, B. M. Franklin, and M. Pereyra (New York: Garland, forthcoming).

[7]For example, K. Salimova, "Educational Wisdom of the Past: A Message for the Future," in *Why Should We Teach History of Education?*, ed. K. Salimova and E. V. Johanningmeier (Moscow: International Academy of Self-Improvement, 1993), 94–107; A. Pehnke, "Ein Plädoyer für unser reformpädagogisches Erbe," in *Ein Plädoyer für unser reformpädagogisches Erbe. Protokollband der internationalen Reformpädagogik-Konferenz am 24. September 1991 an der Pädagogischen Hochschule Halle-Köthen*, ed. A. Pehnke (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1992), 8–34.

[8]See the Opening Addresses and most of the Chinese papers in H. Gehrig (ed.), *Pestalozzi in China* (Zürich: Pestalozzianum, 1995). See also the critical remarks of Zhang Zhiyong, "International Symposium on Pestalozzi's Educational Thought, Beijing (China), 10–14 October 1994," *Paedagogica Historica* 31 (1995): 310–12.

[9]See, for example, J. H. Jordaan, "How a Course in History of Education Serves as a Changing Factor in the Education and Lives of First Year Students," in *International Conference on Education and Change*, ed. J. H. Coetze and T. H. Smith (Pretoria: UNISA, 1996), 70–71.

[10]See, among others, Cohen, "The History," 298–330; M. Lazerson, "Revisionism and American Educational History," *Harvard Educational Review* 43 (1973): 271–74; D. Ravitch, *The Revisionists Revised: A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

[11]M. Depaepe, "History of Education Anno 1992: 'A Tale Told by an Idiot, Full of Sound and Fury, Signifying Nothing'?," *History of Education* 22 (1993): 1–10; M. Depaepe, "Cultural Transmission and the History of Education," in *Education and Cultural Transmission: Historical Studies of Continuity and Change in Families,*

have compared the perspectivism of the historian (of education) to a Sisyphean task. Because of our circumstances, we cannot but view history from our own situation. Instead of an "objective" educational past, we tell the most acceptable story about that past with the resources, concepts, and conceptual frameworks at our disposal. We do this neither to condemn or extol the past, nor to demonstrate that we are correct, but to understand and to clarify it. And in so doing doing, we produce an exposition about expositions, a discourse about discourses, a story about stories and I know that our story one fine day also will be rejected as being "passé." In this sense, the practice of the history of education is a lesson in humility.[12]

By showing how science bears the stamp of the context in which it has been made, a good deal of the epistemic and methodological discord in the field of the history of education, can be put in perspective. Each generation is doomed to rewrite history. For the educationalist, the history of science encourages a relativist view of history's claims.[13] This applies also to empirical and analytical research in education, the showpiece of the "neutral," "objective" educational inquiry.

THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE AS AN ANTIDOTE

My study of the history of experimental research in education from 1880 to c. 1940[14] tried to map an area hitherto outside the pale of social history. At the time, works in this field were nearly all by empirically-minded educationalists. Their triumphalist interpretation of the past had the odor of hagiography[15] and

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Schooling and Youth Cultures, ed J. Sturm, J. Dekker, R. Aldrich, and F. Simon (Ghent: CSHP, 1996), 17–24 (*Paedagogica Historica,* Supplementary Series, vol. 2).

[12]This is as M. A. Nauwelaerts, one of my Leuven predecessors, strikingly expressed it already in the early 1950s.

[13]This thesis was already defended in 1975, by H. E. Tenorth, "Thesen zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Erziehungswissenschaft," *Informationen zur Erziehungs- und Bildungshistorischen Forschung* 3 (1975): 255. For an elaboration of it, see, for example, P. Sedler and E. König (eds.), *Rekonstruktionen pädagogischer Wissenschaftsgeschichte. Fallstudien, Ansätze, Perspektiven* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1989).

[14]M. Depaepe, *Zum Wohl des Kindes? Pädologie, pädagogische Psychologie und experimentelle Pädagogik in Europa und den USA, 1890–1940* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1993). For an English summary, see M. Depaepe, "Experimental Research in Education, 1890–1940: Historical Processes Behind the Development of a Discipline in Western Europe and the United States," in *Education and Europe: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives,* ed. M. Whitehead (Hull: Studies in Education, 1992), 67–93.

[15]See, for instance, G. De Landsheere, *La recherche en éducation dans le monde* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986).

paid little or no attention to cross-cultural interwovenness, nor was there evidence of multifactoral and/or multidimensional analysis. I attented carefully to the development of empirical-analytical pedagogy on four levels: the intellectual, the institutional, the conceptual or paradigmatic, and the social. I hoped to initiate a more critical, differentiated, and multistage interpretation.

On a revisionist interpretation of the rise of intelligence and test psychology in the West,[16] I stressed the congruency of empirical-analytical pedagogy with the assumptions of neo-capitalistic meritocracy. The pronounced preference of positivism for neutral, objective, and value-free research, for example, seemed to guarantee the social peace necessary for the industrializing society, while the Darwinist principle of "the survival of the fittest" contributed to legitimatize a class-structured society. Intelligence and test psychology considerably reinforced the meritocratic view of humans and the world, as though the social "elite" deserved a preferential treatment on the basis of its merits. Meanwhile special education and school-hygiene campaigns encouraged normalization and disciplining of the masses. Insofar as questions of praxis were at the foundation of empirical-analytical research, this approach satisfied the educational reform movement at the turn of the century.[17] Yet radical school reforms, which generally also implied the transformation of social structures, had little or no success.

Institutionally, interest in empirical-analytical research on education led to establishment of countless laboratories, institutes, and associations, the development of specific professional literature, and the organization of national and international congresses. In Western Europe, however, the movement for empirical research in pedagogy retreated after 1918. Few new research institutes were founded, and the term "pedology"—the neologism by which the scientific study of the child was triumphantly announced[18]—gradually

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[16]For example, S. J. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981; 2nd ed. 1994). In this respect, see also M. Depaepe, "Differences and Similarities in the Development of Educational Psychology in Germany and the United States before 1945," *Paedagogica Historica* 33 (1997): 69–97.

[17]See, for example, J. Oelkers, *Reformpädagogik. Eine kritische Dogmengeschichte* (Weinheim: Juventa, 1988; 3rd ed. 1996). For a critical analysis of the actual work on reform pedagogy, see C. Mouchet, "La 'Reformpädagogik,' controverses autour d'une histoire et d'un concept," *Paedagogica Historica* 31 (1995): 769–85.

[18]See, for instance, M. Depaepe, "Science, Technology and Paedology: The Concept of Science at the 'Faculté Internationale de Pédologie' in Brussels (1912–1914)," *Scientia Paedagogica Experimentalis/International Journal of Experimental Research in Education* 22 (1985): 14–29; M. Depaepe, "Le premier (et dernier) congrès international de pédologie à Bruxelles en 1911," *Le Binet Simon. Bulletin de la Société Alfred Binet et Théodore Simon* 87, 612 (1987): 28–54; M. Depaepe, "The International Organization

disappeared from psycho-pedagogical vocabulary. Because of the war, not only were pedologists sidelined, but demand grew for "realistic" disciplines and subdisciplines.

Moreover, empirical research in Europe sought to overtake the revival of the philosophical hermeneutic tradition in pedagogy. Here the pedological paradigm, which marked at the beginning of the twentieth century the conversion to science of amateurishly conceived "child study," encountered opposition. Little finally remained of positivist study of the child by means of observation, statistics, and experiment. Still, an experimental and didactic pedagogy provided a complementary theory of means for ideological (e.g., Catholic) objectives. Thus arose a new market for experimental pedagogy to which university-trained educationalists in Europe thought they might lay claim. Methodologically, experimental pedagogy turned out to be more than ever dependent on the progress of educational psychology, including school psychology. For "professionally" trained psychologists in Northern America, it was a matter of "applying" the general psychological learning theory of connectionism to educational problems. Nevertheless, linear theories of the stimulus-response bond type, including behaviourism, produced little stir in the "old" world. The most extreme development was Nazi educational psychology and youth science, which degenerated into a kind of vulgar biological eugenics.

That educational psychology in Germany had deteriorated into pure propaganda for national-socialist ideology indicates once again that the development of empirical research in education can only be adequately understood on the basis of its social alignment. Empirical-analytical pedagogy, which up to the Second World War had resulted in no more than a collection of divergent and contradictory findings of little use, turned out to be incapable of designing an ideal school or educational method. Extremely significant for the increasing loss of its pedagogical as well as social strength was the diverging of the

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of Paidology Before World War I," in *History of International Relations in Education: Conference Papers for the 9th Session of the International Standing Committee for the History of Education (Pécs, 31st August to the 3rd Sept. 1987)*, ed. S. Komlósi, vol. 1 (Pécs: Institute of Education, 1987), 129–38; M. Depaepe, "Social and Personal Factors in the Inception of Experimental Research in Education (1890–1914): An Exploratory Study," *History of Education* 16 (1987): 275–98; M. Depaepe, "La pédologie comme base d'un monde meilleur. J. Ioteyko et la science de l'enfant au début du XXe siècle," in *Les enjeux éducatifs. Emergence—permanence—recurrence,* ed. Y. Fumat, A. Guillain and P. A. Sigal (Montpellier: Publication de la Recherche, Université Paul-Valéry, 1990), 211–35; M. Depaepe, "The Pedologist Médard Carolus Schuyten: A Crazy Positivist or Just a Starry-Eyed Idealist?," in *The History of Educational Sciences,* ed. P. Drewek, J. Schriewer, and H. E. Tenorth (Ghent: CSHP, forthcoming) (*Paedagogica Historica,* Supplementary Series, vol. 3).

creative educational reforms and experimental pedagogy in the narrower sense. Experimental pedagogy served professional discourse and status enhancement more than it promoted the autonomy of the child. By emphasizing mutual comparison, classification, and selection in measurements, the research took on more of a patronizing than an emancipatory character. What was "best" for the child and the young person was to be determined in the first instance not by the person himself but by research. Moreover, the notions of empiricists, who took the position of committed world improvers, legitimated a meritocratic society. Better child education would make young people happier, and thus productivity, cultural and economic, would rise. Thus the alleged intellectual inferiority of the lower classes and the sexist-coloured distinction between boys and girls could be "scientifically" demonstrated.

BACK TO THE SOURCE: THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION AND THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEACHER

Our general conclusion applied also to socio-historical research into Belgian primary education a group of colleagues and I have conducted in an inter-university and inter-disciplinary team, on the social significance of teachers during the last century.[19] In this study, we started from a "malaise" in the profession. Despite a widespread contention that the status of and social respect for teachers have sharply deteriorated, we found that "status" is a complex reality.[20] Our group operationalized "status" in a set of seven factors constituting "social appreciation." In order of sequence, these factors were: the degree of feminization of the school staff;[21] the professional group's social

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[19]M. Depaepe, M. De Vroede, and F. Simon, *Geen trede meer om op te staan. De maatschappelijke positie van onderwijzers en onderwijzeressen tijdens de voorbije eeuw* (Kapellen: Pelckmans, 1993). See also M. Depaepe and F. Simon, "Social Characteristics of Belgian Primary Teachers in the 20th Century," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 27 (1997): 391–404, on which this paragraph is partly based.

[20]See, among others, M. Burrage and R. Torstendahl, *Professions in Theory and History: Rethinking the Study of the Professions* (London: Sage, 1990); D. Warren (ed.), *American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work* (New York: Macmillan, 1989); I. F. Goodson and A. Hargreaves (eds.), *Teachers' Professional Lives* (London: Falmer Press, 1996).

[21]See also, in this respect, J. C. Albisetti, "The Feminization of Teaching in the XIXth Century: A Comparative Perspective," *History of Education* 22 (1993): 254–63; M. Depaepe, "The Feminization of Primary School Teaching in Belgium," in *The Process of Feminization of the Teaching Profession*, vol. 5 of *The Social Role and Evolution of the Teaching Profession in Historical Context*, ed. S. Seppo (Joensuu: Institute of Education, 1988), 96–105.

background, training, legal position, salary, and degree of control over the profession; and the degree of social integration of the profession. It became clear that the status question could not be considered without qualifications, although a certain loss of prestige in comparison with other professions could not be denied. First, a number of contrary tendencies emerged in the factors investigated, so that the process of status acquisition and/or status loss had a far from univocal course. For example, although statutory protection increased, the control over the profession had to be shared with other parties. In any case, the image of the "schoolteacher" with a "noble calling" has faded away today, but without the new ideal of the "educational specialist" having taken hold.

Social appreciation took place against the background of a changing professional role. Again, a fundamental distinction should be drawn between the assignment of social respect and the image the professional group holds of itself. It could be assumed that the dominating classes as well as the State and the Church fed status acquisition among teachers through promotion of mass education. But they did see to it that this enhanced self-awareness remained within limits: teaching was a vocation, teachers had a mission to fulfill. The professional image that the teachers of primary education themselves disseminated from the second half of the nineteenth century on thus to a considerable extent met prevailing social wishes. Through his teaching, the teacher was socially useful: he[22] was the one who implemented the means for preventing social disaster and unrest; he prepared the coming generation—the potentially peace-disturbing public—for adjustment to a respectable, progressive social system. The education, however, had to be sound, and, since teachers with material worries would not be able to provide it, better pay should follow. The objective was that everyone would enjoy the benefits of education, so demands such as compulsory and free education arose.[23] This profession-specific ideology gave the teacher of primary education a means of climbing socially. The profession and the education it provided were introduced as barriers, since class restrictiveness in the educational environment was widespread and deep-rooted. In claiming better material rewards and higher social prestige, the teachers, like various other professional groups, helped create and preserve structural social inequality. Teachers had this same ideology played out against them by those in power. They might earn somewhat more, but a life free of financial concern was not in store for them.

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[22]The "image building" and "self-discourse" of the teachers were, at the time, male-dominant.

[23]See also F. Simon, "Compulsory Education and the Belgian Primary School Teacher," in *A Significant Social Revolution: Cross-Cultural Aspects of the Evolution of Compulsory Education*, ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Woburn Press, 1994), 74–88.

What remained of the vocation, the exalted service to be rendered above and beyond profit? In striving for professional recognition and status enhancement, teachers of primary education referred almost constantly to such professions as medicine, law, notariat, secondary school teaching, and pharmacy, themselves searching for social security and legitimation. For the teacher, in hindsight, status enhancement and the project of collective mobility have failed, in contrast to that of other intellectual professions. In a society that in assigning social place values wealth more highly than education, someone without an academic education had an even greater handicap to overcome. It looks as though, in the middle classes, the co-disseminators of the profession-specific ideology of the teacher were simultaneously the blockers of collective upward social mobility. Together with the dominating bourgeoisie, these "ideologists" of the "meritocracy" set limits, defining a territory that permitted the segmentation of the profession. The primary education teacher who, finally, had to integrate the children from the lower classes into the prevailing norms and values, was, all in all, preferably kept at a "distant nearness."[24]

PROVISIONAL SYNTHESIS: THE "PEDAGOGIZATION" OF THE SOCIETY AND THE PARADOXES OF EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

In the meantime, we noted similar paradoxes in other areas of the history of education. Take, for example, the questions of curriculum reform, of the evolution of the pedagogical climate in the kindergarten, of the "normalization" of the disabled, or of so-called "continuing education." In virtually all these fields we observed simplistic reasoning about the emancipatory power of education."Pedagogization"[25] in no way proved to guarantee emancipation of the individual.[26] To the degree that institutionalized educational practice was

[24]With gratitude to my colleague F. Simon, who forged this concept. See Depaepe and Simon, "Social Characteristics."

[25]One of the first to use this concept was U. Herrmann, "Die Pädagogisierung des Kinder- und Jugendlebens in Deutschland seit dem ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Zur Sozialgeschichte der Kindheit,* ed. J. Martin and A. Nitschke (Freiburg: Alber, 1986), 661–83.

[26]See, for example, M. Depaepe, "The History of Childhood and Youth: From 'Brutalization' to 'Pedagogization'?," in *Understanding Children's Rights: Collected Papers Presented at the first International Interdisciplinary Course on Children's Rights Held at the University of Ghent, July 1996,* ed. E. Verhellen (Ghent: Children's Rights Centre, 1996), 45–65.

a factor of power and social control, education seemed, as Lea Dasberg once expressed it so aptly,[27] to lead to "keeping down" rather than "raising up."

There is a constant discrepancy between the often revolutionary history of pedagogical innovations and a generally hostile and renewal-unfriendly climate. Ambitious educational reform, whether in the structural arrangement of education or in the content of the curriculum, turned out in concrete praxis to result in would-be reforms and/or watered-down compromises. Such was certainly the case with the Decrolyan Curriculum of 1936 for primary schools in Belgium, announced with much fanfare and intended to produce subject-transcending "totality instruction" through (global) "environment study."[28] Environment study—a concept still deeply imprinted in the collective memory of Belgian teachers—was, ironically enough, not much more than a means to document lessons or to provide subjects for compositions. In the best case, it became a course alongside the others, and nothing more of "global" instruction could be perceived. The fear of "yield decline" and the concern that the call for greater development of and emphasis on the child's expressive skills would irrevocably destroy discipline in education were among the reasons for the failure of their reform. With implementation of radical educational reform it was said, chaos and anarchy loomed.

School life is characterized by stability.[29] Continuity dominates discontinuity.[30] Since the end of the eighteenth century a number of basic mechanisms have been active, strongly determining educational conduct and thinking in the whole Western world. Anyone who needs to be convinced should visit school museums. Looking closely, one notices that all over the western world nearly the same means have been used to initiate learning processes, aiming at the same learning effects. This underlines the central role of pedagogization in Westernization. For instance, has not the success of mass education depended on an asymmetric educational relationship, enabling, by means of the teacher's authority, the discipline of pupils to socially desirable conduct? And above all,

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[27]L. Dasberg, *Grootbrengen door kleinhouden als pedagogisch verschijnsel* (Meppel: Boom, 1975).

[28]M. Depaepe, M. De Vroede, and F. Simon, "The 1936 Curriculum Reform in Belgian Primary Education," *Journal of Education Policy* 6 (1991): 371–83.

[29]See M. Depaepe and F. Simon, "Is There Any Place for the History of 'Education' in the 'History of Education'? A Plea for the History of Everyday Educational Reality in- and Outside Schools," *Paedagogica Historica* 31 (1995): 9–16.

[30]This continuity thesis was mainly developed by J. Oelkers, *Reformpädagogik*; J. Oelkers, "Reformpädagogik. Epochenbehauptungen, Modernisierungen, Dauerprobleme," *Jahrbuch für Historische Bildungsforschung* 1 (1993): 91–108; J. Oelkers, "Break and Continuity: Observations on the Modernization Effects and Traditionalization in International Reform Pedagogy," *Paedagogica Historica* 31 (1995): 675–713.

has not the history of pedagogy been a history of infantilization rather than of emancipation?

We have tried to show how educational reform and experiential paradigms in kindergarten education are less Copernican than generally assumed.[31] Until well into the 1960s, for example, one still encountered stories used long before the Second World War to moralize pupils by asserting a causal link between improper behaviour and punishment. And even though "guardian angels" have finally disappeared from the kindergarten, Saint Nicholas and Black Pete still function as "sticks behind the door" to help achieve acceptable social behaviour through threats and emotional blackmail. A change of mentality, whichever way one looks at it, is thus a long-term project in the educational environment.

Increased attention to the child cannot be equated with emancipatory orientation. The so-called pedocentrism of the New School Movement placed children on a pedestal. They had to play and be happy on the pedagogical island that adults had reserved for them. In the world of adults, they bore no responsibilities at all. Raising children was the postponement of independence, which could easily degenerate into alienation from oneself and from nature and also into increased dependency on others.

From such insights, we realized how many received educational concepts should be revalued. Consider the idea of normalization in special education under the Foucaultian paradigm, generally accepted in the 1980s in Dutch-language history of education.[32] Examples from the history of socially and mentally disabled people demonstrate that the "normalization" of abnormal people is not necessarily the consequence of well-intentioned attempts at integration but just as much a consequence of cultural compulsion and social disciplining contributing to the maintenance and reinforcement of power structures.[33] However, from the Foucaultian point of view, the individual has

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[31]See M. Depaepe, "Die Entwicklung pädagogischer Beziehungen im belgischen Kindergarten während des sog. Jahrhunderts des Kindes. Eine Analyse im Lichte der Reformpädagogik," in *Ein Plädoyer für unser reformpädagogisches Erbe. Protokollband der internationalen Reformpädagogik-Konferenz am 24. September 1991 an der Pädagogischen Hochschule Halle-Köthen,* ed. A. Pehnke (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1992), 49–63. See also M. Depaepe and F. Laevers, "Preschool Education in Belgium," in *International Handbook of Early Childhood Education,* ed. G. Woodill, J. Bernhard, and L. Prochner (New York: Garland, 1992), 93–103.

[32]F. Simon, "Education," in *Historical Research in the Low Countries,* ed. N. C. F. van Sas and E. Witte (The Hague: Nederlands Historisch Genootschap, 1992), 58–67.

[33]In this respect, see also M. Depaepe, "Soziale Abnormität und moralische Debilität bei Kindern. Ein Diskussionsthema auf internationalen wissenschaftlichen Zusammenkünften am Anfang dieses Jahrhundert," *Paedagogica Historica* 16 (1990): 185–209.

neither unity nor free will. People are only combinations of positions in divergent structures functioning according to their own laws. The ideology of the free and creative unitary subject—itself a product of discipline—contains precisely a restriction of human capabilities. In this sense, it is very repression and the threat of social exclusion that supposedly increased integration into society.

Up to now, the rather stringent application of the normalization paradigm in the history of education has led to a negative colouring of educational history. All too often in Foucaultian approaches, the masses are seen as a passive group over which the work of civilization flows. I have tried to demonstrate how one-sided this is. In the question of supply and demand on the education market, not only "cultural compulsion" but also "cultural consumption" was involved. Thus educational intentions were often opposed to their putative educational effects. Like Antonio Gramsci,[34] one might say it was precisely because of the imposed generalization of mass education that ordinary people were enabled to rise above folklore, superstition, and the magic of the traditional worldview.

We have need of intermediary theories and concepts that, without abandoning interpretational schema such as social control, domination, and disciplining, are fine-meshed and narrative enough to permit a contextualized history of education without reductionism.[35] The history of education, as Tenorth stated recently, requires an internal and independently elaborated theoretical framework specific enough to meet the particularities and ambiguities of the educational situation.[36] The historian of education has depended too much on conceptualizations drawn from the outside. Without conceptual tools from the "innerside" of the history of education, it will be difficult to explain educational paradoxes in the ongoing "pedagogization" of European education—for example, the success of Rudolph Steiner's Waldorf pedagogy, despite its demonstrably illegitimate theoretical and political bases.

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[34]See, for example, B. Simon, "Schooling Society: The Care of an Elite for the Masses in the 19th and 20th Centuries," *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift* 12 (1987): 204–12.

[35]See E. Dillmann, "Institution Schule und mental-kultureller Prozeß. Die deutsche Volksschule in der historischen Kulturforschung. Eine Skizze zum 18. und 19. Jahrhundert," *Jarhbuch für Historische Bildungsforschung* 1 (1993): 17.

[36]H. E. Tenorth, "Lob des Handwerkes, Kritik der Theorie—Zur Lage der pädagogischen Historiography in Deutschland," *Paedagogica Historica* 32 (1996): 343–61.

ON AN EXOTIC TOUR: EDUCATION IN THE BELGIAN CONGO AND ZAÏRE

The "pedagogization" thesis has found a distinct application in our research on colonial education in the former Belgian Congo.[37] Because Western civilizing took place in the colonies under pressure, the study of the colonial educational past, even more than that of Western history in general, reveals the systemic faults and pedagogical paradoxes of the "modern" educational project.[38]

One such paradox is the discrepancy between educational objectives and educational effects. The colonization of the area, accompanied by destruction of the existing culture, set off educational processes in the autochthons that, in the long term, turned out to be incompatible with the points of departure of the colonization/evangelization. Although we did not accept the stereotypical, leftist-revisionist view of the missionary as capitalist stooge (there was no ambitiously orchestrated educational plot against the Blacks), colonial education was nonetheless not terribly emancipatory. Belgian civilizers, including missionaries, played the tutelage card for too long.[39] True, the Church in the second half of the 1950s increasingly lined up behind the Congolese people, but the heritage of the past weighed heavily. At the time of independence in 1960, Belgian Congo did not have the necessary functionaries and know-how to govern itself effectively. Instead of striving to broaden awareness, missionaries and colonists tried to socialize the pupils entrusted to them to become docile helpers of the colonial system. Insofar as critical thinking was promoted, it was little more than an undesired side effect. In any case, one was aware that the success of the colonial adventure required a certain introduction to Western thought and the Western cultural pattern, particularly for the "elite." But too much education could lead to destabilization of the autochthon life. The question "How far can/must we go?" thus hovered constantly in the background of the quasi-exponential expansion of primary education for the masses.

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[37]M. Depaepe and L. Van Rompaey, *In het teken van de bevoogding. De educatieve actie in Belgisch-Kongo (1908–1960)* (Leuven/Apeldoorn: Garant, 1995). A preliminary sketch in English was published as M. Depaepe, F. Debaere, and L. Van Rompaey, "Missionary Education in the Belgian Congo During the Colonial Period (1908–1960)," *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 48 (1992): 265–80.

[38]See M. Depaepe, "An Agenda for the History of Colonial Education," in A. Nóvoa, M. Depaepe, and E. V. Johanningmeier, *The Colonial Experience in Education: Historical Issues and Perspectives* (Ghent: CSHP, 1995), 15–21 (*Paedagogica Historica*, Supplementary Series, vol. 1).

[39]See, for example, M. Markowitz, *Cross and Sword: The Political Role of the Christian Missions in the Belgian Congo, 1908–1960* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973).

The fact that resistance regularly arose against the all-too-stringent disciplining from above—for example, the relative success of local coloured ideologies like Kitawala and Kimbanguism[40]—illustrated, as did the relatively high dropout rate, that the Western educational machine ran anything but smoothly. The dysfunction of agricultural education, intended to halt the flight from the land and the accompanying loss of control over the masses, constituted perhaps the best example of this. But the increasing dissatisfaction of the *évolués,* who had been able to push through to the scarce forms of continued and higher education, also points in the same direction. According to the educational dream of the Belgian policy makers in Belgian Congo, the autochthons should be prepared for independence. This was done through paternalistic preaching of harmonious cooperation. The internal dynamics of Western civilizing produced among autochthons a repugnance for manual labour and caused social disintegration through emigration to the city and the taking of jobs in governmental administration. In the countryside, elementary education after Independence headed for catastrophe, and in the urban centres, too, double-tracked education manifested itself ever more painfully. In addition to increasingly numerous excluded people, education delivered an elite with inferiority complexes who vented their frustrations on subordinates. Belgian education in the Congo resembled not a successful enterprise but a runaway locomotive that, in spite of all the good intentions, raced to its own destruction.

Without batting an eye, Zairian leaders took over the spatial, institutional, social, and mental structures of colonialism.[41] Mobutu himself used Christian metaphors of "saviour," "Messiah," and "apostles," along with Biblical references to the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, to clarify his relationship to the party. He himself personified the power and the authority of the Belgian King Leopold II, once presented by Belgian missionaries and colonists as a kind of demigod. Even the Zairian striving for national unity and control of ethnic conflicts seemed to be not much more than a legacy of Belgian paternalism. Meanwhile, Mobutu's arguments for authenticity and originality rested on the same veneration of the chief laid down in a sociology

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[40]G. Mwene Batende, *Mouvements messianiques et protestation sociale: le cas du Kitawala chez les Kumu du Zaire* (Kinshasa: Faculté de théologie catholique, 1982); S. Asch, *L'église du prophète Kimbangu: de ses origines à son rôle actuel au Zaire (1921–1981)* (Paris: Karthala, 1983).

[41]H. Vinck, "The Influence of Colonial Ideology on Schoolbooks in the Belgian Congo," *Paedagogica Historica* 30 (1995): 355–405; S. Gasibirege Rugema, *Approche du processus d'inadaptation-adaptation de l'enseignement primaires à travers les réformes scolaires au Zaïre (1880–1980)* (Brussels: CEDAF, 1989).

of "wild peoples," bathing in a kind of "primitive purity" thought to be African. But, in reality, this stemmed from an old European stereotype.[42]

Thus concepts of "development" and "development work" are inseparable from the Western modernisms and the colonial school supplied the language, conceptual structures, and insights to understand the past. As in the West, Zairians must learn to live with the absurd paradoxes of disciplining strategy.[43] In view of the recent "Congolese" revolution, the pressing question is whether it is already much too late for Africa.

A NEW-FASHIONED CULTURAL HISTORY OF EDUCATION: FROM THE GRAMMAR OF SCHOOLING TO A GRAMMAR OF PEDAGOGIZATION

In the field of colonial education there was an enormous gap between rhetoric and reality, explicable partly by the rationalizations education workers in the field themselves introduced. In this sense, study of the educational mentality of the education worker, to which I tried to contribute by publishing the records left by a missionary relative,[44] is and remains a *conditio sine qua non* for the further development of educational historiography. Not only do educational ideas and theories undergo all sorts of "practical" discolourations and distortions, but theoretical insights generally acquire *a posteriori* justification that veils the assumptions of educational praxis. Biography provides a welcome supplement to the abstract void that the structuralist, leftist-revisionist and neo-Marxist explanatory schemata have neglected. In an educational *histoire totale,* narrative material is essential for supplementing, nuancing, and correcting circumstantial and coarse-grained normalization theories.[45]

Yet experience-oriented historiography demands conceptual tools. "Educationalization" links educational theory-formation with concrete educational

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[42]W. MacGaffey, "Education, Religion, and Social Structure in Zaire," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 13 (1982): 238–50.

[43]See M. Depaepe, "'Rien ne va plus. . . .' The Collapse of the Colonial Education Structures in Zaïre (1960–1995)" (paper presented at the eighteenth meeting of the International Standing Committee for the History of Education, Kraków, Poland, August 1996).

[44]M. Depaepe, R. Lefebvre, and Zana Aziza Etembala (eds.), *"Tot Glorie van God en tot Zaligheid der Zielen": Brieven van Moeder Marie Adonia Depaepe over haar leven en werk als zuster van Liefde in Belgisch Kongo (1909–1961)* (Antwerpen: Standaard Uitgeverij, 1992).

[45]A. Nóvoa, "On History, History of Education, and History of Colonial Education," in A. Nóvoa, M. Depaepe, and E. V. Johanningmeier, *The Colonial Experience in Education: Historical Issues and Perspectives* (Ghent: CSHP, 1995), 38–61 (*Paedagogica Historica,* Supplementary Series, vol. 1).

praxis in the rigid and institutionalized educational landscape. Its core—the grammar of schooling[46]—helps account for the inertia of "modern" educational acts.[47] According to Cuban, the cultural heritage and the social functions of the school, their bureaucratic structure, the nature of teaching, and the training and personality of future teachers have promoted "traditional" relations with children, and faulty implementation of educational renewal results from faith in ancestral educational myths. The success of mass education depended on asymmetric patterns in educational relationship, thus the disciplining and moulding of the pupils. More pedagogy, therefore, did not necessarily result in more autonomy for the child but rather in extended dependency. For Jacques Rancière, this is the paradox of emancipation.

> It would suffice to learn to be equal people in an unequal society. This is what *to be emancipated* means. But this simple thing is the most difficult to understand, particularly since "progress" has inextricably mixed equality and its contrary. The task to which republican abilities and hearts are devoted is to make an equal society with unequal people, *to reduce* inequality indefinitely. But who has taken this stand has only one way to achieve it: the *integral educationalization of society, that is, the general infantilization of the individuals that compose it.*[48]

Our educationalized society still claims that problem-free relations with children are possible if only one applies the "right," that is, "scientifically justified" principles. That these principles rest on infantilizing tricks, little more than veiled commands, does not worry the average educator.

This view of the past puts the "grammar of schooling" of Cuban and Tyack into the broader perspective of a "grammar of educationalization" (or, even better, a "grammar of educationalizing").[49] Belgian historian Albert d'Haenens speaks of the "scribalization" of Western culture, embodied in school space

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[46]See D. Tyack and W. Tobin, "The Grammar of Schooling: Why Has It Been So Hard To Change?," *American Education Research Journal* 21 (1994): 453–79; L. Cuban, "Reforming Again, Again, and Again," *Educational Researcher* 19, no. 1 (1990): 3–13; D. Tyack and L. Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[47]K. Dams, M. Depaepe, and F. Simon, "Sneaking into the Classroom: Dealing with the Source Problem," in *Silences and Images: The Social History of the Classroom*, ed. M. Lawn, K. Rousmanière, and I. Grosvenor (New York: Peter Lang, forthcoming).

[48]J. Rancière, *Le maître ignorant. Cinq leçons sur l'émancipation intellectuelle* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1987), 221–22. Emphasis added.

[49]M. Depaepe, "Educationalization: A Key Concept in Understanding the Basic Processes in the History of Western Education" (keynote address to be presented at the conference of the Australia-New Zealand History of Education Society, Newcastle, Australia, December 1997).

where students remain subordinate to teachers.[50] But there is also the specific logic of education itself; to be explored historically. Rather, it may mean a balanced understanding of the paradox of educationalization: the pastoral compulsion of the educator,[51] who wants to concretize his or her intentions on the one hand, and the liberating experience of the learning, knowledge-acquiring individual on the other.[52]

[50]A. d'Haenens et al., *L'école primaire en Belgique depuis le Moyen Age* (Brussels: CGER, 1986): 7–20.

[51]K. Meyer-Drawe, "Versuch einer Archäologie des pädagogischen Blicks," *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 42 (1996): 659.

[52]For an analysis of this concept, see W. Frijhoff, "Education's Memory," in *Education and Cultural Transmission: Historical Studies of Continuity and Change in Families, Schooling and Youth Cultures,* ed. J. Sturm, J. Dekker, R. Aldrich, and F. Simon (Ghent: CSHP, 1996), 340–53.