

Review: Roith, C. (ed.). (2022).
History of Education. Theoretical
Reflections and Contemporary Research.
Madrid: DELTA Publicaciones.

In today's Europe, owing to the Bologna process, one central question of teacher training based on competence development is to determine which subjects and what fields of science and problem areas the training of university students should include. Even in pedagogy, a training programme that not only draws on traditions but also puts into effect new aspirations, ways of thinking and contributions to science requires the re-examination of previous subjects, contents, methods and objectives. It is a worldwide phenomenon that among the pedagogical fields, the *history of education* is looking for its place and function in teacher training or, more broadly, in the liberal arts. In recent years, several writings have expressed concern about the future of the history of education, such as McCulloch's 2011 book, *The Struggle for the History of Education* (Abingdon: Routledge). These works, along with the annual conferences of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), studies in history that are published in journals and the continuous exchange of ideas between researchers, made many people consider how this philosophical field can be cultivated, researched and taught in the future in such a way that it contributes to the better functioning of education and society in general, to the solution of local or global problems and to the development of critical thinking.

Today, the teaching and research of the history of education can only maintain its previously attained rank and place in university education if the subject (the scientific field itself) is continuously enriched with topics, sources and methodology. They build on the countless opportunities offered by new information and communication tools, while in terms of its content, they turn even more into a problem-oriented discipline with a comparative approach. The history of education can be a foundation for prospective and active teachers to encounter during their training, a universal knowledge in the broadest sense of the term and a way of thinking that is based on and can be developed from such knowledge. This is in line with the international research directions that are increasingly being outlined at the beginning of our millennium, as many efforts can be observed in the world today to expand the boundaries of the history of education and to develop the methodology of comparative pedagogy. In 2014, Hoffstetter and colleagues wrote about this in their study titled, 'Mapping the discipline history of education', and published in the columns of *Paedagogica Historica*: 'The history of education is experiencing a tremendous revival. An impressive number of studies take up rich topics and original subject matter...' (p. 871.) The following aspects can be highlighted in the cultivation of the history of education: diachronic in-

vestigations must be combined with synchronistic research oriented towards the history of a given problem; large-scale impact and reception studies are needed; it is important to learn and internalise the technical steps of a source-oriented approach, source exploration and source criticism; new methodologies are needed, such as the spreading and unravelling of image research; the range of sources included in analyses must be expanded as much as possible; in addition to written works, physical and pictorial sources and pieces of oral history must be examined; and in addition to official archival materials, attention should be paid to ego documents such as diaries and journals, memoirs and correspondence that shed light on individual life stories and micro events. With regard to topic, it is important to pay attention to the history of non-institutional education (the different forms of socialisation); to also deal with social groups/peoples that were previously absent from writings in the history of education (women, children, rural populations, minorities, non-European cultures, pre-colonial educational habits of the peoples of other continents, etc.). Nowadays, in addition to exploring and preserving national values, it is also an important endeavour to put into effect a comparative approach, even a global perspective.

The volume reviewed here was published in 2022 by Christian Roith and is a prime example of how putting into effect the aforementioned aspects, combining the diachronic and synchronic perspective, presenting both theoretical and empirical features, relying on colourful source material and versatile methodology can lead to the production of a university textbook that, through the problems and diverse topics it offers and through its demanding language, captures the interest of readers and students of pedagogy and stimulates their creativity and develops their areas of competence. As the editor himself wrote in the introductory chapter of his book, 'my intention was not to produce a classical textbook on the history of education with a systematic review of different periods in both countries, but to offer a series of essays on topics which will hopefully allow interesting insights into the structure of historical developments that had their effects on the evolution of educational theory and practice' (p. XI). Since 2011, Roith has been a professor of Theory and History of Education at the University of Almeria. The author, who is well known among international education historians, deals mostly with research in the history of education and comparative education, and the exploration and comparative analysis of Spanish and German topics. In addition, the topics he researches sit on a very broad spectrum; particularly novel are his results in image research, textbook analysis and the study of the history of childhood. Roith's co-authors of the book are Teresa Gerdes, Ana María Martínez Martínez and Antonia Lozano Díaz.

The 14 studies, which are diverse in terms of topics and as a whole, forming a wholistic, colourful and exciting unit, start at the basics of educational theory, explaining the meaning of pedagogy, and end with a multifaceted presentation of today's Spanish education system.

The opening chapter, which Roith co-authored with Teresa Gerdes, is an epistemological chapter made with a propaedeutic purpose, the like of which manuals and textbooks on the history of education rarely contain, although its inclusion is

thoroughly justified. Indeed, without understanding what common and scientific knowledge mean and what the difference is and relationships are between the natural sciences and the humanities, it is not possible to understand the educational phenomena, aspirations, theoretical foundations and goals of different historical eras. As you can read in the chapter, 'The foundations of three important methodological approaches in the social sciences, namely hermeneutics, critical rationalism and critical theory, will be presented' (p. 1). The second chapter describes the historical changes of the 'concept of education', of the concept itself and of the content of education changing from age to age as a social phenomenon. After a nuanced, diverse introduction to linguistics and word etymology, the author gives a meta-level analysis of the concept from the aspect of the philosophy of education, recalling the thoughts of both old authors and contemporary researchers.

Roith begins the third chapter of the volume with an idea that has no doubt been formulated in the mind of every author who teaches history of education or writes a book for its effective learning. It is necessary to make a decision on which historical period the presentation of the history of education should begin with: the ancient times, the period of the early river valley civilisations or a focus on the last 3–400 years. Here, the researcher made a good decision: in addition to the simple, diachronic approach, he puts into effect its combination with a comparative approach oriented towards the history of the problem. In the third chapter, Roith reports on the main research results of Spanish and German research on the history of childhood, not aiming for completeness but rather offering the readers with really interesting works worthy of further consideration. The author emphasised that at the centre of these works are ideas and theoretical considerations about children because it is actually not possible to acquire knowledge of how children actually lived in the different eras, families and geographical locations. The chapter highlights the significance of Philip Ariès's work on the history of childhood and its influence on other authors, alluding to more recent research and discussions and polemics generated by the French author.

The following two studies in the volume differ in their subject matter but are connected by the methodology of source analysis, which is iconographic analysis. When the history of education was beginning to form in the 19th century, the collection and analysis of images were not yet one of its subjects. The first technical books and university textbooks were published in most cases without illustrations and written references to iconographic sources. The systematic collection, systematisation and analysis of images of educational situations began in the last decades of the 20th century. In 2000, among others, Depaepe and Henkens wrote a comprehensive study on this *visual revolution*, which was also clearly observable in research in the history of education, titled 'The history of education and the challenge of the visual', in the columns of *Paedagogica Historica*. In his studies published in the journal, Roith reviewed the imagery of Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún's 16th-century work on education titled *The Florentine Codex*, a source little known in Europe, and the illustrations of Comenius's very well-known and often analysed textbook created in the 17th century, *Orbis sensualium pictus*. Sahagún's extremely comprehensive and data-rich manuscript,

commonly referred to as *The Florentine Codex*, consists of 12 volumes on different subjects. Its 2,446 pages provide an introduction to the history, daily habits, natural and social conditions, scientific knowledge and worldview of the people of Central Mexico shortly after the arrival of the Spaniards. Each of the 2,468 colour illustrations included in the codex is rich in detail and aesthetically and meticulously elaborated, reflecting both Mesoamerican pictorial writing and the European tradition of encyclopaedic documentation. Given that in this work, Sahagún described in detail the prevailing view of children, family and institutional education among the Aztecs, we can agree with the author that analysing this source from the perspective of the history of education does have an important message. On the one hand, it helps to get out of Eurocentric thinking, and on the other hand, it sheds light on the history of the Spanish-Aztec relationship and the process of transculturation.

Chapter 5 of the volume focuses on the classic work of Comenius. The history of this book is quite different from that of Sahagún's codex. As the *Orbis pictus* is a constant feature of international conferences, journals and university courses, it is probably one of the most frequently quoted, analysed and widely known sources in the history of education. It is precisely for this reason that it is difficult to say anything new about it, but Christian Roith, owing to a professional and novel iconographic-iconological approach that pays particular attention to metaphors and symbols, has succeeded in doing so. Therefore, hermeneutic starting point, that is, the interpretation of the content of the images in the context of the text, was the key here.

Chapters 6 and 7 of the volume provide an example of how to create a micro-biographical portrait of an outstanding educational thinker who is significant in terms of the impact and reception his work had had in the past. The parallel portraits of Rousseau and Pestalozzi and their novel principles, the effects of which continue to this day, unfold as a result of Roith's research. From a didactic point of view, it is an excellent idea to introduce the two in parallel: while Rousseau brought about foundational changes in pedagogy in the area of individual and private education, Pestalozzi accomplished this in the area of family, community and social education.

Chapter 8 contains Roith's study on the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Free Institution for Teaching/ILE), a progressive Spanish institution founded in 1876, which is the Spanish initiative that can be considered as the predecessor of the New School movement. Chapter 9 shows an excellent example of how renowned researchers can gradually introduce an important and interesting topic in the history of education in such a manner that for years, by means of discussions, conversations, conference presentations and studies, they keep exploring the given topic (in this case, the history of the emergence, development and impact of the Hamburg schools) even more, opening up newer thematic areas. In a study co-authored by researcher Ana María Martínez Martínez, Roith analysed the PhD thesis of the Swiss-German reformer Robert Jakob Schmid, published in 1936, and its translations (that were often published with many distortions and errors).

The next three chapters of the volume take the reader to the period of the Second Spanish Republic between 1931 and 1936, which is still to be fully explored from the perspective of the history of education. On the one hand, the author took stock of the plans developed since the 19th century to improve the educational and cultural conditions of the rural Spanish population, the further development of these plans in the 1930s and the activities of the educational missions sent to the villages until the outbreak of the civil war. For this chapter, two video lectures available on the World Wide Web provide an excellent impression not only of the research topic itself but also of how to arouse the interest of university students in studying the past and how to involve them actively and in a creative manner in the publication of the results. Chapter 11 shows, through the analysis of children's drawings from the time, how the children experienced the horrors of the civil war and how their former, calm, peaceful life was confronted with the terrors, losses and uncertainties of everyday life. Before presenting the drawings themselves, the author of the study took stock of the most important collection sites, museums and libraries where these drawings of children between the ages of 5 and 15 years, mostly made in schools and collected by teachers, can be found. The analysis of the drawings made at the end of the 1930s for both therapeutic and propaganda purposes has lessons to offer even today. In the 12th study of the book, Roith provides a taste of the results of his textbook research. The remarkable material collected and systematised by the Spanish project MANES was examined from the point of view of how the Civil War was presented in textbooks, pointing out how history textbooks served the ruling ideology during the four decades of the Franco regime.

In Chapter 13, the author, who is well acquainted with the results and sources of both German and Spanish scientific research, used quantitative and qualitative analyses of the issues of two major Spanish journals, *Revista Española de Pedagogía* and *Revista de Educación*, published between 1945 and 1990 to review how Germany's pursuits in the field of the history of education affected the Spanish scientific discourse. An important outcome of this research is the finding that in several cases, quotes from German authors were, taken out of the original context, only used by Spanish authors to support their own positions.

The last chapter of the volume, Chapter 14, is a work by Antonia Lozano Díaz and Christian Roith. Its subject does not belong to the field of the history of education but instead provides an overview of the current state of the education system in Spain, highlighting problems such as the dropout rate that is exceptionally high on a European scale or graduates' difficulties in finding a job.

As the editor of the volume wrote in his introduction, the main purpose of the studies published in the volume was to stimulate the readers to think critically and to think through historical processes and events that help us understand that in history, just because something is newer does not necessarily mean it is better. In line with the aspirations and field of inquiry of the ISCHE and its journal, *Paedagogica Historica*, which were developed in recent decades, the authors also aimed to make known and analyse alternative sources such as personal recollections, children's drawings, novels, booklets, brochures, history books and docu-

mentaries, the examination of which has already yielded important results and holds enormous further potential and possibilities. For those who read this book, there can no longer be any doubt that the study of the history of education is still necessary in the 21st century, as Christian Roith and colleagues clearly showed the *raison d'être* of the discipline and definitely defined the focal points in terms of sources and methodology and new subject areas that will inspire researchers to make new, equally exciting and scientifically valuable volumes. This volume proves that the history of education is not an outdated, boring field of science, but a discipline that is very much alive, interesting and useful in terms of shaping the future and creating more just societies—one that is excellent for developing the competencies of university students and future teachers in many ways.

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