

Foreword to the Thematic Section

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The complexity of the contemporary world has had significant impact on the daily life of educational institutions. The boundaries between the inside and the outside of schools have become increasingly permeable to socio-cultural processes, and the trajectories of the individuals who work and study there have become ever more diverse. The discourse and enactment of public education policies, as well as research, teacher education, and teaching itself, all invite us to reflect on what is happening on a day-to-day basis in educational institutions. In particular, it is important to consider the implications of these processes for the realisation of citizenship, human rights and the right to education, with the aim of a guarantee of learning and a dignified life for all.

In light of these factors, this special issue – *Dialogue and living together in the everyday life of education* – aims to promote a discussion about educational spaces and their margins from a plural dialogical perspective. Bringing together a range of articles on formal and non-formal education from various countries, the special issue focuses primarily on the micro level of educational interactions, drawing particularly on ethnographic approaches. Nevertheless, the macro-sociological perspective cannot be forgotten, given the importance of understanding how relations of interdependence are produced in the interstices between what happens in the daily life of institutions, and in the social sphere.

The global panorama of the current context presents us with a co-existence of extreme and contradictory relations. On the one hand we have the struggle for the recognition of human diversity and a harmonious planetary cohabitation. On the other, difficulties in the acceptance of difference, and as a consequence attachment to homogeneity. The challenges of a globalised society in which the frontiers of the economy and human mobility are *opened* (at least for the privileged), debates over economic colonisation, but also cultural colonisation, are brought to the table. Bauman and Bordoni (2016), in their discussion of the *state of crisis*, explain that many of the tensions experienced in the 21st century stem from the impotence of local political spheres to solve problems originating at the global level, given that the global sphere does not consider or is incapable of incorporating local experiences. In light of this backdrop, reflections on dialogue and living together in everyday life are timely. This special issue draws on Lefebvre's (1991, p. 31) understanding that:

The everyday is humble and solid, it is that which moves by itself, whose parts and fragments are linked together in the use of time. It is that without the need for an examination of the articulation of those parts. It is, therefore, that which has no date. It is (apparently) insignificant.

In addition, according to the conception of Pais (2003, p. 31), the everyday can be understood as a route of knowledge, whose challenge “[...] is to reveal social life in the texture or foam of the ‘apparent’ routine of the everyday, as the latent image of a photographic film”.

The theoretical and empirical considerations that the authors of this special issue evoke in their framing of their research foci provides an opportunity to observe the everyday life of formal and non-formal educational processes through different lenses. It also allows us to become familiar with the interactions that take place in the meandering of the everyday life of schools and non-formal spaces, and through them, to give visibility to the portraits of diverse modes of experiencing and of constructing contemporary education, in its most diverse levels and modalities. In the words of Lefebvre (1991, p. 35), observing the everyday makes it possible to:

[...] characterise the society in which we live, one which generates the everyday (and modernity). It is an attempt to define that society, to define its transformations and perspectives, retaining (amongst apparently insignificant facts) something essential, and ordering those facts. The everyday is not only a concept, it is also a conduit for understanding society.

The texts brought together here do not attempt to encompass the totality of dimensions of the everyday in education, in formal and non-formal spaces, yet they provide diverse snapshots to reconsider education in the contemporary world. The special issue starts with the contribution of Alex Guilherme and John Morgan, *Considering the Role of the Teacher: Buber, Freire and Gur-Ze'ev*, which provides crucial theoretic-

cal discussion to underpin the rest of the collection. Drawing on these three theorists in turn, the authors distinguish between three modes – the builder-teacher, the political-teacher and the improviser-teacher – drawing out implications for understanding the role of the teacher in contemporary society.

The everyday of educational processes in non-formal settings is explored through the two articles that follow. The first is Spyros Themelis's *Learning from and with the Education Movements in Greece and Brazil: knowledge, action and alternatives*. This comparative study with social movements in the two countries explores the nature of activist knowledge, focusing particularly on the relationship between theory and action, plural dialogical processes and the role of reflection in critical consciousness.

Marika Tsolakis's study *Street Discussion Spaces in Post-conflict Côte d'Ivoire: non-formal learning, dialogue and daily life* also juxtaposes two forms of non-formal learning space, but in this case the *grins* and *agoras*. These street discussion groups provide an arena for dialogue between different generations and social groups, mediating the diverse political, personal and professional concerns of the participants.

In Ivette Hernandez's *Youth Activism in Chile: from urban educational inequalities to experiences of living together and solidarity*, the focus turns to Chile and the mobilisations of secondary students in 2006 and university students in 2011. The author challenges conventional conceptions of centre/periphery and inclusion/exclusion, showing the complex geographies of inequalities in Chilean schooling and the spaces for political empowerment and action.

We return again to Greece in Ioanna Noula's *Critical Thinking and Challenges for Education for Democratic Citizenship: an ethnographic study in primary schools in Greece*. Here, the authors address the intersection between public policy and the everyday in schools, in the context of an integrated curriculum reform. University entrance exams and parental expectations are seen to constrain teachers' efforts to promote critical thinking in the classroom, and undermine the project of strengthening democratic citizenship.

Cristina Perales Franco uses an ethnographic approach to explore *convivencia* in the context of public primary schools in Mexico. In the article, *An Ethnographic Approach to School Convivencia*, the author explores the subtleties of meaning of this concept of living together (with no exact cognate in English), distinguishing between restrictive and comprehensive approaches, and drawing out implications for relations within schools, and between schools and local communities.

The Symbolology of Nicknames in the School Everyday Life, and the social circumstances of their production, is the focus of analysis of José Machado Pais. In a comparative study of different school contexts in Portugal and Brazil, he explores these phenomena, and everyday slang, as a methodological device for understanding the reality of schools and their social processes.

In the final contribution of the special issue, *The Objectification of the Pedagogical Relationship in Everyday School Life*, Nilda Stecanela explores the concept of *coisificação* from Freire, literally meaning to turn into a *thing*, in this case to dehumanise pedagogical relations. The author focuses on the *cultures of complaint* in Brazilian schools, drawing on narrative research with teachers and students, showing the separations and distances which prevent a truly dialogical relationship.

These contributions, therefore, unite considerations from across six countries in four continents, and a diversity of levels and educational spaces, providing a rich array of in-depth explorations from which to develop a deeper understanding of the everyday in education. What emerges from all of them – in the context of the oft-cited contemporary challenges of divisive populism, social fragmentation and individualisation – is the importance of moving from coexistence to *convivencia*. Reflecting Galtung's (1996) notions of negative and positive peace, what is needed is not just a movement from explicit conflict to acceptance and tolerance, but to an engaged living together involving understanding and dialogue. This form of living together enables not only viable and cohesive societies and polities, but also the opportunity for conscientisation and the forging of social transformation in accordance with justice.

This special issue has focused on the everyday life of education as a counterpoint to the more common analyses of educational inequality from a macro perspective – although, as stated above, a full understanding of education requires an interaction between these two lenses. Schools, and non-formal educational spaces, are recipients of just and unjust relations and dynamics from society, but are also producers of them: the long-standing literature on the hidden curriculum has shown us the pernicious side of this relationship, but we also need to acknowledge the more hopeful, generative role of these spaces. A genuinely common school – with all its challenges and imperfections, as shown by the articles in this issue – is central to the project of a just and humanising society.

References

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