



Reviews

Martínez, M., Esteban, F. Jover, G. and Payá, M. (2016). *Education, in theory*. Madrid: Síntesis. 219 pp. ISBN: 978-84-9077-438-0

Place theory into controversial situations derived from practice and think, think about education “time and again, relentlessly” (p. 11): that is the aim of this book, orchestrated by four key authors in the discipline of the Theory of Education. Their work draws the reader into a reflection on education that theory may not always be as theory would suggest and yet is more in need of it than ever.

The book first looks at four major thematic pillars: learners, teachers, what is taught and learned, and finally, the educational practice. The first main section, *What Good are Teachers?* starts off with a tip of the hat to teachers and their personal influence: *Without you none of this would have happened*. The reader is invited to view teaching as a way of life characterized by personal excellence at: a) transmitting the best, b) creating unique learning spaces, and c) adding a personal touch to their students. The authors approach the reality of teaching under the premise of the latent predominance of instrumental rationality at educational institutions, which in consequence leads to the loss of the personal dimension and identity of the learners. Reflection on the teacher-student relationship reveals a bond founded on help, friendship, respect, trust, optimism, equality, listening, and reciprocity, all geared toward an eminent goal to reach in the search of an educational influence.

The second section turns to the question *What needs to be learned today?* As a result of the principle of instrumental rationality configured under the coordinates of effectiveness and efficiency, everything deemed useful nowadays is aligned as true. The authors warn about the risk of educational knowledge eclipsing everything else regarding thought and its exercise in reflection as something that basically boils down to a disdain for classical culture. However, is everything that is true also deemed to be useful? Our experience with classical culture is precisely

what lets us establish a universal continuity between distant generations. If it is the duty of education to propagate the possibilities for a fuller life, why restrict our action to the territory of the useful? What matters is not the usefulness but the worthiness; all school knowledge should be worth something to the learner.

The third section sets its gaze on the learner and the two prevailing traditions on how students are thought of: the liberal and the communitarian. Because of the predominance of the liberal perspective, they warn about the negative effects such an imbalance may have on education, particularly on its moral dimension. Although both perspectives have been out of kilter for years but have coexisted in teaching practices nevertheless, the authors make it a point to show their complementary and compatible nature. Their analysis does not lack in confrontation between these two ways of understanding education: as a civilizing process and as natural development, each with very different implications for education.

After outlining their reflections on teachers, learners, and what should be taught and learned, the authors use the final section to discuss educational practices. Their critique revolves around three main axes that govern the world of education: a) obfuscation to fit into the surroundings, b) affirmation that educational practice belongs to everyone, and c) the excessive importance of the learner in his own education. Finally, the last chapter is followed by a brief historical pilgrimage that captures the essence on the configuration of the Theory of Education as a disciplinary, curricular field in Spain. As a whole, the sum of the chapters lends itself to an interactive, open reading, flexible for all kinds of audiences. It is especially suited for “curious, hungry minds” (p.10) who, thirsty from their curiosity and dissatisfaction, enliven and enrich the discussions that hold up the paths of education.

Laura Camas Garrido

Prendes Espinosa, M.P. & Román García, M. (Coords.) (2017). *Entornos personales de aprendizaje: Una visión actual de cómo aprender con tecnologías*. Barcelona: Octaedro. 181 pp. ISBN: 978-84-9921-901-1

The concept of personal learning environment (PLE) goes beyond a simple collection of digital tools or a platform to gather the resources used in learning processes, we must understand it considering cognitive processes, strategies and personal attitudes. The PLE is a personal representation of everything that affects our learning inside or outside the classroom, face to face or virtually.

This work reflects the collaboration of 21 authors, and it is structured in two parts. The first one places us in CAPPLE, a project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (EDU2012-33256) where researchers analyse the competences for lifelong learning based on the use of the PLE. Participants are students of the last year of the Spanish Bachelor's Degrees. The second part offers an expanded view through the contributions of external authors, with other visions or concretions about the PLE as well as establishing relationships with other projects or environments.

The first block, "*El proyecto CAPPLE*", is made up of four chapters that gradually allow us to deepen our understanding of the PLE and the CAPPLE project. In the first chapter, the coordinators of the book offer a general approach to the concept and introduce us to the developed project. The second chapter, from the hand of González, Sánchez and Castañeda, complements the previous one and broadens it with a review of theories and characterization of the investigations that have been previously done on the PLE. In the third place, we find a space mainly dedicated to explaining the creation and validation of the questionnaire used to carry out the research. Finally, in the fourth chapter, Gutiérrez, López, Serrano and Solano present outstanding results of the data obtained as well as a series of substantiated proposals addressed to the university institutions for the improvement of the PLE.

The second block is entitled "*Aportaciones y visiones en torno al PLE*" and allows us to deepen the concept over four more chapters, with contributions from prominent authors in the field. Salinas and Marín present the PLE through a review of the LMS, emphasizing that evolution focuses on the fact that students no longer have to adapt to a system, but

that each student configures their own space. In the sixth chapter, Aguiar, Artiles, and Rodríguez reflect on didactic and organizational approaches from the learning environments in the training of higher education teachers. We reach the seventh, where Galván and Molas focus their contribution on highlighting the relationship between PLE and digital portfolios; they do so helped by the exemplification through the project *Carpeta Digital*.

Finally, the eighth chapter of the monograph, which still belongs to the second part of the book, has a different format. Entitled “*Visiones en torno al PLE*”, international authors offer individually their own perspective. Bartolomé focuses his contribution on the quality of self-regulation of learning that unquestionably throughout the book is proved as an essential element of the PLE. Ebner offers his contribution enriched by the knowledge of his participation in the PLE projects of the Technological University of Graz. Martínez contributes the most critical vision of the book by debating reflections that should not be ignored. Cabreiro is about the PLE “on the way to learning to learn”. And, finally, Attwell sets his sights on the future by highlighting the keys to the relationship between the PLE and MOOCs, open education and learning analytics, among others.

In short, it is a monograph for different profiles of readers willing to go in depth on their knowledge of personal learning environments. The students or new profiles in the field will find multiple visions and conceptualizations to facilitate the understanding of the PLE, while researchers, professors or profiles that have a good knowledge of the subject will be able to deepen in a complete conceptualization at the same time that discover data and conclusions extracted from the CAPPLE national project. The variety of authors and the composition of the monograph make it an example of general interest.

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