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Researching the history of non-western education

In recent years there has been more and more emphasis on the research of the traditions and history of non-western (from another perspective: Non-European) education in the international historiography of education. Recent research is characterized by a multi-perspective, multi- and interdisciplinary approach, post-colonial thinking, the significant broadening of hitherto examined materials, reinterpreting the processed materials and creating new methodological grids and bases. This kind of approach, a world-wide research, and the comparative research of the history of education requires a different kind of preparedness (for example advanced language knowledge and apart from knowledge in the history of education and cultural history, a basic knowledge in ethnic-cultural anthropology and comparative education studies) from the researcher and makes a continuous experience exchange necessary, along with a cooperation between researchers and research groups often not only in regions and countries but across entire continents.

In Hungary, the research of the non-western history of education, and the publication of its results in Hungarian literature, scientific journals and handbooks used in higher education is only making its first steps, even though Hungarian researchers already had results relevant to the field since the 19th-century birth of this discipline. However, a comprehensive and problem-centred interpretation of education and cultural history, which not only has a diachronic approach but also a synchronic one, requires the knowledge of educational traditions based on non-European/non-western patterns. Without these, a comparative historiography of education which takes into account effect- and reception-research as well is impossible.

In this issue of the HERJ journal we attempt, on the one hand, to give a brief overview of the changes in the most important international literature and research tendencies of the field and/or the approach. On the other hand, we attempt to bring European and non-European researchers together in the hopes of future cooperation. The latter, those Chilean or Brazilian researchers who published studies in the journal, have the enormous scientific advantage that, even as non-Europeans, they have a significant and thorough knowledge-base of the history of our continent, including the history of education. Their point of view and problem-raising could definitely be an inspiring help for us Hungarian researchers.

We intend this issue to be the forerunner of further journals and volumes with a similar approach along with conferences based on a comparative-intercultural approach which brings new information of non-western education. Those young researchers will be able to aid us in this enterprise, currently still students or doctoral students, who not only venture bravely between languages and branches of study, but also between countries and continents – either in reality, or virtually.

In the first study of the volume, Katalin Kéri shows what the research of non-western history of education means, why it is important and what traditions it has. There is a distinguished focus on the presentation of those books and studies that describe the past of non-western education, and in connection with that, on the attributes of the genre and research methodology as well as on the consideration of the difficulties regarding comparison.

Orsolya Kereszty examines how the mostly English post-colonial theory, strongly related to ISCHE and the international History of Education Society UK, becomes a more and more determining approach within the research field of the history of education from the 1980s. Clearing up concepts is a significant part of her study, in which the author not only used the research publications of international authorities but also those of significant Hungarian authors. The study could be the starting point of important further research seeing that every researcher needs to face the problem of what ‘western’ and ‘non-western’, European and non-European means and how different authors in different historical time periods use and understand the dichotomy of ‘modern’ and ‘primitive’.

In their study, José Gondra and Alessandra Schueller look back on the 19th century history of education of Brazil. In their studies, which, due to their choice of topic, had an inter- and intracultural basis, revealed how education and folk education contributed to shaping the Brazilian nation. In addition to specific “brazilian” traditions, the use of European patterns had an important role in the development of the Brazilian history. For Hungarian readers, the study will most likely serve with a great amount of new and interesting data of the history of education of such a vast country. One supplement for this: In Brazil it was written in the constitution as early as 1824 that every (free, regardless of ethnic background) citizen has the right to study. The two authors show the major steps of the development of education in a political- and social-history grid, supported by a variety of contemporary legal documents and local data (whose research has been broken down to individual settlements and regions).

In his article Pablo Toro Blanco analyses the political discussion on Law n° 9864 (January 25, 1951), which reformulated the school subvention system in

Chile. The problems discussed in his paper are familiar to Europeans as well, even though they are specifically Chilean too. The author builds up his topic from the 1830s, so the reader can find a brief overview of the Chilean history of education, which, previously, has never been mentioned in Hungarian works on the history of education. The author used contemporary newspaper articles and the transcript of speeches as a basis for the debate about the law. One of his main findings is “that in this conflict at the early 1950’s is shown the initial public emergence of contemporary *subsidiarity principle*, cornerstone of an idea that eventually prevailed in Chilean educational policies after the civic-military dictatorship (1973-1990) led by Augusto Pinochet”.

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