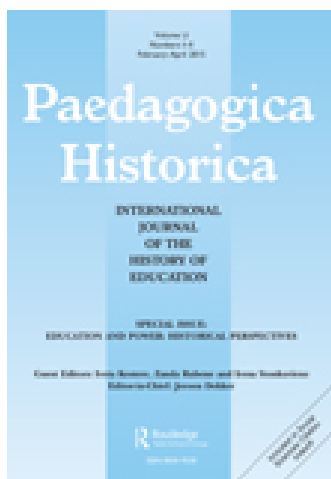


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Introduction: power - invisible architecture of education

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Introduction: power – invisible architecture of education

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Looking at the focus of power, the entire history of society, in the past and present, can be explained as changes and interactions of power relations or networks of power and power play.¹ Westwood maintains that “Power is the invisible architecture of the social”.²

Both social groups and individuals form power relations and are included in them. As power is a logical component of every action we take,³ it actually shapes who we are. Thus, by understanding the networks of power, we understand ourselves better, as well as our place in society and history. Russell considers that it is exactly power through which a person becomes a member of society. Putting it more precisely: the citizen is educated in training with power.⁴

Education is one of the most important fields of society and is key to the individual’s life for understanding and explaining power conceptions.⁵ Education and power relations are closely intertwined: education is both the legitimiser and the instrument of power, as well as the generator of power relations. Education can be explained through power, and power can be understood through education.

Legitimation is extremely important for any power and authorities realise a definite ideology through education, thus bringing up loyal members of this society, i.e., its citizens. The basis for raising members of society lies in disciplining, civilising and leading the child into culture⁶ or, in other words, normalising. The intention of this process is to change the child, and this is always connected to some

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¹See Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage, 1977/1990), 14; Anthony Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 349; Sallie Westwood, *Power and the Social* (London: Routledge, 2002), 5, as well as Hegel’s concept that is continued in the works of Karl Marx, which treat social relations as the struggle of opposing forces.

²Westwood, *Power and the Social*, 6.

³Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, 347.

⁴Bernard Russell, *Education and the Social Order* (London: Routledge, 1932/1993), 11.

⁵See Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1978).

⁶Immanuel Kant has explained this process, see *Über Pädagogik* (Königsberg bey Friedrich Nicolovius, 1803), 5–12, http://www2.ibw.uni-heidelberg.de/~gerstner/V-Kant_Ueber_Paedagogik.pdf (accessed September 12, 2014).

sort of power. Therefore, space governed by power and authority necessarily forms the field of education.⁷ Through education, power penetrates both the public and the private space. Rose writes that the child is always observed – either by God or by teachers.⁸

In education, power relations are generated on different levels: teacher–pupil, pupil–pupil, among teachers, between school and parents, among different schools and between different socio-cultural groups.⁹ Every child is disciplined, “straightened out”, examined and assessed through classroom design, lesson structure and emphasis on obedience and punctuality.¹⁰ Existing societal relationships and, thus, the existing social structure are reproduced through education.¹¹ In other words, education maintains the existing distribution of forces in society or its hierarchy. However, at the same time, education produces people who are able to resist and say “no” to power.¹² Thus education can create both the providers of power and its adversaries.

Power in the field of education inspired the choice of the ISCHE 35 theme: *Education and Power: Historical Perspectives*. The conference took place in August 2013 in Riga and was organised by the University of Latvia and the Baltic Association of Historians of Pedagogy.

Several research questions inspired discussions regarding power and education. How does power – usurped or self-proclaimed, appointed, democratically or naturally won – act upon the field of education? How can we identify and explain the relationship between power and education? How is it possible in the field of education to support, restrict, stimulate and deny through power? Does power encourage resistance and how does this occur? Is it possible to resist power in education? Considering these questions, three basic players, with power in the field of education, were revealed: (1) bearers of power, its agents and tools; (2) subjects of power; and (3) opponents of power.

1. Bearers of power, agents and tools

Anyone can become, or can be made into, the bearer or instrument of power – both living creatures and things, as well as social and abstract phenomena. When exploring power relations, it is important to see and determine who owns and who handles the tools of power (or violence), that is, who owns power resources and who can become the bearer of power. Giddens defines power as the use of resources aimed at reaching outcomes.¹³

⁷Megan Boler, *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education* (London: Routledge, 1999), 4.

⁸Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 76.

⁹Susanna Hannus and Hanku Simola, “The Effect of Power Mechanisms in Education: Bringing Foucault and Bourdieu Together,” *Power and Education* 2, no.1 (2010): 3, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/power.2010.2.1.1> (accessed August 2, 2014).

¹⁰Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 76–77.

¹¹Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, 11.

¹²Boler, *Feeling Power*, 4.

¹³Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, 347.

One of the most demonstrative, visible, oldest and most diverse holders of power is the state,¹⁴ which owns a wide arsenal of tools of power and violence.¹⁵ The state can influence education directly by creating a system that becomes the instrument that manipulates society. Marc Depaepe and Karen Hulstaert, in their paper “Demythologising the educational past: an attempt to assess the ‘power of education’ in the Congo (DRC) with a nod to the history of interwar pedagogy in Catholic Flanders”, speak about education systems formed by official power that have developed into power instruments which promulgate a certain ideology and manipulate learners’ minds. This idea is continued by Alberto Martínez Boom in his paper “Governed and/or schooled” in which he treats school and schooling as that which disciplines and straightens out society.

However, education and knowledge themselves are also traditionally viewed as power that broadens an individual’s influence and creates her/his individuality.¹⁶ Maris Vinovskis and Tatjana Kože have experience in policy-making and, thus, the use of power in state affairs, and look upon politicians’ knowledge as an instrument of power. Vinovskis, in his paper “Using knowledge of the past to improve education today: US education history and policy-making”, shows the necessity of accumulating historical experience and contemporary understanding in policy-making and history research. Kože and Irēna Saleniece have expressed a similar idea in the paper “Education policy in the Republic of Latvia: lessons from experience”, in which Kože’s experience as Minister of Education, as reflected through the political past of Latvia and the splendour and misery of the academician’s position in the field of active politics, is analysed. Both papers reveal that education and knowledge are power that could help in complicated political situations.

We have already mentioned that it is important for each power to prove its legitimate authority. Evidence can become the tool and agent of power,¹⁷ which could take the form of a survey in this process. Flavian Imlig and Thomas Ruoss, in their paper “Evidence as source of power in school reforms: the quest for the extension of compulsory education in Zurich”, reveal mechanisms of how the power of evidence was expressed on different levels and in various steps in school reforms. They conclude that evidence finally became a form of knowledge in the hands of the government and, as a result, can shape political processes. Joseph Watras, in his study “From colonialism to developing countries: surveys and educational reform in British Tropical Africa, 1910–1990”, analyses contradictory surveys from colonies and casts doubt on their power to influence improvement of schools in British Tropical Africa.

The traditional agents of power in education are teachers. However, the possibilities schools offer of exercising power over the weakest are also used by medical doctors, becoming agents of power in the field of education.¹⁸ Each scholar explains the activities of these agents from the personal position and viewpoint: the teacher and the medical doctor in education can be both hero and dictator. Michèle Hofmann speaks about the power of doctors in her paper “Ärztliche Macht und ihr

¹⁴Yet we could agree with Schöplin that the state nowadays is losing its importance. See George Schöplin, *Politics, Illusions, Fallacies* (Tallin: TLU Press, 2012), 155.

¹⁵Westwood, *Power and the Social*, 18.

¹⁶Russel, *Education and the Social Order*, 10.

¹⁷Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education*, 15.

¹⁸For example, Rose writes that mothers, together with medical doctors, have gained power in children’s upbringing starting from the nineteenth century. See Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 129.

Einfluss auf den Schulalltag in der Schweiz im ausgehenden 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert” (Medical power and its influence on everyday school life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Switzerland) and shows that pupil “normality” is a negotiable concept that different players in the field of education can manipulate.

Education is closely connected with emotions, which, too, are a strong tool for expressing power. Emotions give the possibility of exhibiting power over others and power over oneself. Emotions give the individual a chance to feel power.¹⁹ An example is the teacher’s gaze, explored in a historical perspective by Joakim Landahl,²⁰ who, in his paper “Emotions, power and the advent of mass schooling”, presents schools and classrooms as emotional communities and shows how power in school works through emotions.

Boler writes about the power of feeling,²¹ Rose about the power of freedom²² and Westwood mentions such agents and tools of power as ideas and understanding.²³ These agents of power can be connected with “soft power”, which does not implement its aims with violence and enforcement, but with lasting attraction,²⁴ influencing a person’s mind and emotions. Ian Grosvenor and Natasha Macnab in their paper “Photography as an agent of transformation: education, community and documentary photography in post-war Britain” analyse a photo as the bearer of “soft” power through which the individual starts to better realise his/her place in society and history, as well as his/her identity.

2. Subjects of power

Power is traditionally viewed as dominance of one agent of power over another.²⁵ Thus, in power relations, there is always one who subjugates and one who obeys. For the rest, these roles can change depending on the situation. Inequality creates power²⁶ and power creates inequality.

The teacher traditionally possesses a dual role in education. He/she is both the bearer of power and an instrument that has an effect on pupils, as well as the implementer of power that is determined by official authorities. The position of educators in power games is discussed in two papers: Harry Smaller’s “The teacher disempowerment debate: historical reflections on “slender autonomy” and Wayne J. Urban and Marybeth Smith’s “Much ado about something? James Bryant Conant, Harvard University, and Nazi Germany in the 1930s”. Both studies show that there is always somebody above, or next to, the pedagogue who is ready to decide – instead of the teacher – what should be done, and that the impact of the educator (even if he/she is the president of Harvard University) on the processes implemented by official power is rather small.

¹⁹Boler, *Feeling Power*, 2, 4.

²⁰Joakim Landahl, “The Eye of Power(-lessness): On the Emergence of the Panoptical and Synoptical Classroom,” *History of Education* 42, no. 6 (2013): 803–21.

²¹Boler, *Feeling Power*, 4.

²²Rose, *Powers of Freedom*.

²³Westwood, *Power and the Social*, 13.

²⁴Lin Li and Xiaonan Hong, “The Application and Revelation of Joseph Nye’s Soft Power Theory,” *Studies in Sociology of Science* 3, no. 2 (2012): 48.

²⁵Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, 348; Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education*, 4.

²⁶Schöplin, *Politics, Illusions, Fallacies*, 154.

The phenomenon of official power – the state – manipulating the individual has been explicit in societies governed by authoritarian regimes where direct political control is executed over education as knowledge production.²⁷ The reflectivity of any individual is denied,²⁸ which means that the actor in the field of education becomes a powerless tool in the hands of the political authorities.

Education, as the subject of power in authoritarianism, is discussed in two papers: Aija Abens in her study “Effects of authoritarianism on the teaching of national history: the case of Latvia” explains how two authoritarian regimes manipulate the teaching of national history and how political power, by pushing aside all the other players in the field of education, influences directly the aims, curriculum, teaching aids and methods, as well as the teacher’s position in the teaching process. Joanna Wojdon develops similar ideas in her study “The system of textbook approval in Poland under communist rule (1944–1989) as a tool of power of the regime” in which she describes the censorship of textbooks as a method of power used by the political regime over knowledge and, thus, over pupils’ minds. Political power, both in teaching history and in writing textbooks, puts ideology in the foreground marginalising such basic pedagogic values as pupils’ interests, conformity of learning to pupil age and personal importance of knowledge.

3. Opponents of power

The interests of those involved in power relations can vary. Thus, the existence of power also incorporates conflict.²⁹ Power, as a space of conflict, is central in the works of two influential authors on the subject, namely Foucault and Bourdieu.³⁰ Each player in the space of conflict is compelled to make a choice. It is possible to get on with power, to stand against power and one can even try to ignore its existence.³¹ The attitude to power is determined largely by how we understand power. Reasonable forms of power are used for the sake of general safety; “soft power” is a playful concept concerning the nature of things and people. Power becomes a threat when it turns into violence,³² which actually is the physical form of power.

The more aggressive power becomes, the more conscious, wider and definite becomes people’s opposition. It is paradoxical that the same agents and tools used in the resistance to power are also used for the realisation of power. Thus, education can be used both as an agent of official power and in resistance to it. Education as resistance is revealed in the study “Schooling in the Kovno Ghetto: cultural reproduction as a form of defiance” by Amanda Marie Slaten Frasier. She describes how the doomed Jews in the Kaunas (Kovno in Russian) Ghetto learned traditional Jewish culture by turning education into resistance in spite of the hopeless situation, alien ideology and brutal violence. Evidence is given about crimes committed by the

²⁷Toms Ķencis, “A Disciplinary History of Latvian Mythology” (PhD diss., University of Tartu, 2012), 33.

²⁸Westwood, *Power and the Social*, 18.

²⁹Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, 348.

³⁰Hannus and Simola, “The Effect of Power Mechanisms in Education” 4.

³¹Janīna Kursīte, “Ievads. Par varu, varmācību un nožu” [Introduction. On power, violence and anticipation], in *Kultūra un vara. Raksti par valodu, literatūru, tradicionālo kultūru* [Culture and power: articles about language, literature, traditional culture], ed. Janīna Kursīte et al. (Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2006), 7.

³²Regarding power and violence, see Westwood, *Power and the Social*, 5.

Nazi's: a picture taken secretly showing a group of pupils and a teacher plays an important role in this story. The picture makes us look at the photo, not only as a source or tool of power, but also as a weapon of resistance, thus testifying to the fact that the same instrument can be used in implementation of power and in opposition to it.

Reconciliation with or opposition to power can be both a collective and an individual choice, and the forms of resistance can differ. Moshe Shner in his study "Two educators in the chasms of history: divergent paths of resistance to radical oppression" reveals the path of resistance chosen by two Jewish educators facing death in the ghetto, thus showing teachers not only as passive instruments of political power games, but also as the bearers of the power of education in conditions that are close to hopelessness.

Today, when the era of grand narratives is at an end because no narrative can encompass the entirety of human experience,³³ in this collection of papers we try to incorporate as many diverse viewpoints as possible on the relations of power and education in the course of history. The realisation of power in education acquires different forms and contents in different times and space. Yet it also shows that the analysis of relations of power and education worldwide forms a common discourse that is important for attesting to the values of an open society. The perspective of the historical analysis of education reveals education and its actors as heroes, victims and dictators, and serves as a reminder never to forget the values that make education powerful.

Notes on contributors

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³³Schöplin, *Politics, Illusions, Fallacies*, 157.