

Perspectives on Education in a Changing World

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Education always involves dynamics. Whether in kindergarten, in the classroom, in a lecture hall, or in one's private study: education is inconceivable without transformation. Educators are therefore continually confronted with processes of transition, transfiguration, and transformation.

When in May 2015, educationalists, educators, philosophers, theologians, historians, and sociologists met in Vienna for the international Congress "Transformations. Education in a Rapidly-Changing World", the central question was *not* that of the changes and developments which students and educators undergo as an existential part of all learning processes, but rather the question of whether and how education *itself* should be transformed in light of the diverse and rapid social, cultural, technological, economic, and demographic changes within recent years. Following previous Congresses in 2011 and 2013, this third Congress organised by the "European Network for Academic Steiner Teacher Education" (ENASTE) aimed to reflect upon these developments and their relevance for childhood and youth, for education, schools, and teacher education programs.

In the context of about forty lectures and subsequent discussions, it became repeatedly evident that a transformation of educational approaches demands a continuous reflection upon and discussion of the fundamental goals and tasks of educational practice. It is only possible to think through a possible transformation of schools on the basis of a fully developed concept of the objectives of schooling. The question of a transformation of the structure and organisation of the teacher-student relationship can only really be posed when the educational relevance of this relationship has been thoroughly reflected upon. It is for this reason that this special edition of RoSE – the publication of a number of the lectures and papers presented at the ENASTE Congress – includes not only contributions regarding contemporary social phenomena such as multiculturalism and social acceleration, but also articles which address fundamental topics such as the relevance of relationships and personal development within the field of education. Further papers present research regarding individual fields of educational practice, addressing ways in which societal challenges raise concrete pedagogical questions.

At the beginning of the third ENASTE Congress, Gert Biesta offered thoughts on the role of the institution "school" in the context of modern society. His ideas are presented in a paper which opens this issue of RoSE, with an appeal for schools to be considered as „free spaces“ which are capable of withstanding societal pressures. Schools should provide space "where practising is possible, particularly practising what it means to be in the world in a grown-up way".

Child development in pre-school and early elementary school was the subject of Rainer Patzlaff's lecture, published here in written form. A central critique within Patzlaff's examination of current trends in educational politics is that in most places, a "realistic concept of development" is lacking: development

is understood in a linear manner instead of as a process of metamorphosis. Patzlaff outlines a “concept of development in tune with reality“, as he describes Rudolf Steiner’s approach to this theme, as basis for a “health-creating and health-sustaining approach to education“. Such an approach stands in contrast to current trends such as the promotion of early schooling.

The conditions for and support of child development are also central themes in the following papers published here: Richard Landl points to the importance of motoric activity in schools, to counteract the decline of fine and gross motor skills in children and adolescents. He emphasizes the importance of experiences in nature as “development facilitators“. An understanding of human development as a process evolving through relationships is central to Leonhard Weiss’s contribution, which examines the educational relevance of relationships involving mutual recognition. He thereby defines parallels between the original social-philosophical concept of a “theory of recognition“ and basic concepts and practices in Waldorf education.

In an educational approach which works actively to meet the demands of a transforming world, the ethical convictions underlying a teacher’s pedagogical practice are of decisive relevance. Leif Tjärnstig and Ruhi Tyson address questions which are thereby raised regarding the self-image of teachers. Their articles unite conceptual considerations with empirical research, defining teaching and learning as a “practice of intersubjectivity“ (Tjärnstig) and as “moral praxis“ (Tyson). Tyson’s paper particularly addresses the question of teacher education – an issue which is also relevant in the following texts. Janne Fengler and Alexander Röhler explore the theme of personal development in the context of childhood education courses. They carried out a study which demonstrates, among other things, how students and graduates look back on courses designed to promote personal development, and how they judge the relevance of such coursework for themselves and their pedagogical practice. Franz Feiner’s paper presents two projects which focus on the question: “How can a holistic approach to learning succeed in promoting an ethical approach to a sustainable future?“. On the basis of anthropological considerations regarding the dialogical disposition of human beings, Feiner presents teaching materials which he developed for philosophizing with children about ethics.

An article by Jürgen Peters describes a special form of Waldorf teacher education. The project he describes, „Teacher Education in Practice“, focuses on the development and promotion of self-reliance, a culture of feedback, and teamwork in schools. The concept of self-reliance also plays an important role in the following contributions, though focused less on teacher education than on that of pupils. Regina Vogt argues, primarily on the basis of systems theory, that “for a modern approach to education, it is decisive whether learning occurs in a self-referential or externally referential manner“. Dirk Randoll addresses the theme of “self-reliant learning“ in Waldorf schools – an issue which is gaining increasing relevance in the context of the challenges posed by our rapidly transforming society.

Individual portfolios designed by students to document their work reflect one method of self-reliant learning. Friedrich Vogt describes a constructive method used in the development of portfolios. Angelika Wiehl uses an example from a tenth grade classroom to demonstrate how a Waldorf pedagogical approach can allow “abilities for independent and self-reliant judgement and action [to become] the point of departure for educational activity“. Wiehl’s considerations are based on the conviction that in light of current social and political challenges, a pedagogical approach is necessary which “is meaningful, dignified, and liberal, and which opens a path of development for each individual“.

These goals of pedagogical practice are also the subject of the articles thereafter. Udo Käser and Andreas Durban describe a school theater project to demonstrate how artistic work can promote the development of social skills among students, for instance, dealing with bullying. Michael Zech discusses how history coursework can help students develop consciousness of their own identity – something particularly relevant in times of increasing interculturalism, but also increasing neo-nationalism. This developing awareness of “self“ needs to move within the space between personal and collective criteria of identity, and at the same time have an idealistic component “which defines itself transpersonally, transregionally, and transnationally, through the respect for all members of humankind“.

The context of a globalized world is also the backdrop of Gunter Keller's article, which addresses the characteristic Waldorf aim of developing abilities of thinking, feeling, and willing as the basis for individual ethical action. There is probably no contemporary phenomenon which challenges the capacities of individual judgement, and the search for meaning among young people in particular, more than that of technological development. Patricia Feise-Mahnkopp's article addresses this theme, building on basic principles of media pedagogy to present a series of courses designed for the 12 grades of Waldorf school, in which works of art from pop culture are used as a point of departure for developing media literacy.

Interculturalism was one thematic focus at the ENASTE Congress, and this is also reflected in a number of articles published here. Wolfgang Nieke's article provides a terminologically and conceptually well-founded consideration of the potentials and limits of "multicultural education". In the context of his final thoughts, Nieke emphasizes that globalisation and interculturalism challenge us to understand our own values as "correct, but also relative". A contemporary form of "education for world citizens" can only take the form of a "reflexive and self-reflexive transformational education", whose goal cannot be a "stagnant point of view, but rather one belonging only to the present, carried by livable, accepted convictions". Albert Schmelzer asserts that "intercultural pedagogy has not yet succeeded in resolving the problem of the disadvantages faced by children from immigrant backgrounds within the German school system". In his article, Schmelzer suggests that forms of individualized teaching, phenomenologically oriented methodology, and artistic-practical coursework characteristic of Waldorf pedagogy might "be trend-setting for the further development of intercultural and transcultural pedagogy." Johanna Leek also addresses multiculturalism in her description of ethics coursework in Polish schools. Neil Boland brings our attention to the challenges and tasks of Waldorf pedagogy in a non-European cultural context. He argues that Waldorf pedagogy needs to be integrated within the individual geographic, historical, and societal context of each school. Carlo Willmann questions the extent to which the repression of religion within schools might exacerbate religious radicalization and fundamentalization. He argues for the need for a school culture which recognizes the religious dimension of mankind and offers the possibility to experience various religions in a context of mutual respect, appreciation, and dialogue. The Intercultural Waldorf School in Mannheim offers one example of how the concept of general religious education in Waldorf schools might provide a model for new paths in interreligious education.

The Congress "Transformations. Education in a Rapidly-Changing World" was hosted by the Center for Culture and Education in Vienna, an institute of Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences, on behalf of ENASTE, the network of European institutions of higher education offering Waldorf teacher education programs in an academic context.

We want take this opportunity to thank all of the colleagues who contributed both to the success of the Congress and to the current publication: Caroline Bratt, Marcelo Da Veiga, Karl Garnitschnig and Peter Lutzker, members of the scientific committee who provided key help in preparing the Congress; our support team in organizing the Congress (Angelika Bühler, Jennifer Kleinfurher, Gabriele Reimann and Heidemarie Vogt); and the editors of RoSE, who made this special edition possible. We also want to extend our thanks to all of the colleagues whose lectures and papers contributed to a productive exchange of thoughts and questions regarding education in a rapidly changing world!