
AVOIDING THE DEVIL

Peace and the educationalisation of social problems

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Abstract: The educationalisation of social problems serves as favoured instrument to transform big societal topics, e.g., peace, social justice, equality, equity and equal opportunities, inclusion, recognition, freedom and liberty, into problems of education and educational research. These topics then turn into educational visions and missions. However, they often lack their negatively connoted counterparts: war, injustice, inequality, but also failure, disappointment, even the subversive movement against its own honourable intentions. By examining the epistemological, the sociological and the historical perspective, this paper illustrates how the epistemological profile and the educationalisation of social problems contribute to constructing both positive, forward-looking theological and teleological patterns while masking the other side, the Devil. It concludes that longing for peace might just be part of the desire to create an educational vision of a perfect and harmonious world.

Keywords: educationalisation, peace, educational research, normativity

EVITANDO AL DIABLO: LA PAZ Y LA EDUCACIONALIZACIÓN DE LOS PROBLEMAS SOCIALES

Resumen: La educacionalización de los problemas sociales sirve como instrumento favorito para transformar grandes temas sociales, como por ejemplo, paz, justicia social, igualdad, equidad e igualdad de oportunidades, inclusión, reconocimiento y libertad, en problemas de educación e de la ciencia de la educación. Estos temas se convierten en visiones y misiones educativas, sin embargo, a menudo carecen de sus contrapartes negativamente connotadas: guerra, injusticia, desigualdad, pero también el fracaso, el fallo, la decepción, incluso el movimiento subversivo en contra de sus intenciones honorables. Al distinguir una perspectiva epistemológica, sociológica e histórica, el artículo ilustra cómo este perfil epistemológico y la educacionalización de los problemas sociales contribuyen a construir patrones teológicos y teleológicos positivos y orientados hacia delante, y a enmascarar el otro lado, el

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diablo malvado. Llega a la conclusión de que el anhelo por la paz podría no ser más que una forma de una visión educativa de la perfectibilidad y el anhelo de la armonía.

Palabras claves: educationalización, paz, ciencia de la educación, normatividad

ÉVITER LE DIABLE: LA PAIX ET LA PÉDAGOGISATION DES PROBLÈMES SOCIAUX

Résumé: La *pédagogisation* des problèmes sociaux sert d'instrument privilégié pour transformer les grands thèmes sociétaux, telles que la paix, la justice sociale, l'égalité, l'équité et l'égalité des chances, l'inclusion, la reconnaissance, et la liberté, en problèmes d'éducation et des sciences de l'éducation. Ces thèmes deviennent des visions et des missions éducatives, mais il leur manque souvent leurs contreparties négatives : la guerre, l'injustice, l'inégalité, mais aussi l'échec, la déception, voire le mouvement subversif s'opposant à leurs propres intentions honorables. En s'appuyant sur une perspective épistémologique, sociologique et historique, l'article illustre comment ce profil épistémologique ainsi que la *pédagogisation* des problèmes sociaux contribuent à construire des modèles théologiques et téléologiques positifs et prospectifs tout en masquant l'autre face du problème, le diable. L'article conclut que le désir de paix n'est peut-être qu'une forme parmi d'autres d'une vision éducative de la perfectibilité et de l'aspiration à l'harmonie.

Mots-clés: *pédagogisation*, paix, science de l'éducation, normativité

Introduction

The educationalisation of social problems serves as favoured instrument to transform big societal topics, e.g., peace, social justice, equality, equity and equal opportunities, inclusion, recognition, freedom and liberty, into problems of education and educational research. Contemporary expectations of educational policy, economy, parents, the public etc. challenge teachers and pedagogues to take up these crucial (and historically contingent) societal problems, implement them into curricula and teach them to children, students and adults in order to contribute to bettering and optimising individuals and thus the entire society. The aims of media education, hygiene education, religious and ethical education, gender education, diversity education, peace education etc. demonstrate ongoing transformative attempts to solve societal problems beyond the regular curriculum of cultural skills and techniques. The attempts are based on and aim at the realisation of the vision of a perfect, good, performative, reflexive, even divine human being. This aim incorporates theological, even eschatological ideas, for example that human beings were created in the likeness of God or the *harmonia mundi*. Peace, and its symbol, the dove, seems to serve as an important signifier of a positive future. However, it is striking that peace seems to be the implicit concept itself, which serves as an *ultima ratio*, a final point of

reference, a medium and a goal at the same time, which marks both the condition of a positive future and the positive future itself. It is more a fantasy than a clearly defined concept used in a scholarly context and for analytical purposes.

In the year 2014 the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), took place at the Institute of Education, University of London. Its framing theme was «Education, War and Peace» (see McCulloch & Brewis, 2016a). In the same realm of the call for papers and the abstracts book for the ISCHE conference¹ the guest editors McCulloch and Brewis (2016b) write in their introduction to the special issue of *Paedagogica Historica*:

The 36th ISCHE conference, at the centenary of the outbreak of World War I aims at addressing relationships between education and war, and also the role of education in fostering peace. (...) Peace includes a formalized state of harmony, and also embraces reconciliation and collaboration towards shared goals. Education in many forms, institutional and informal, contributes to war and to peace through formal systems at all levels from school to university, military training, through civics and citizenship, museums, peace movements, art, the media and official propaganda. (McCulloch & Brewis 2016b: 1)

The conference of educational historians and the special issue reflexively maintain the ambivalence, even the dialectics of the relationship of war and peace and the contributions of education in regard to both sides of the coin. However, they also warn of the «clear risk of the history of peace becoming submerged in these dramatic events (sc. wars and conflicts, E.K.)» (McCulloch & Brewis, 2016b: 3). The special issue itself, however, proves that the warning was issued in vain. Only one of the 13 contributions contain the word «peace» in title or subtitle (Angulo, Groves, Milito Barone, & Hernández Laina, 2016). The papers of the special issue are more about war than about peace. We find a similar bias when searching the educational research database ERIC (Education Resources Information Center²). The thesaurus includes the keywords peace and war in the main category «government and politics». For the linked key words «peace AND war» we find 1.206 entries. «War» as a single word not linked to «peace» has 11.403 entries; however, searching for «peace» alone results in a meagre 3.956 entries, most of them in the field of «peace education». As terms related to «peace» ERIC comes up with: Conflict Resolution, Foreign Policy, Global Education, History, International Education, International Organizations, International Relations, Prosocial Behaviour, Treaties, War, World Affairs. In other words, peace is subsumed rather broadly as a general concept under the big header of «government and politics». This means that – in contrast to dramatic events like wars and conflicts – peace in education serves as a more hidden concept with broad and strong, normative-positive, teleological, even theological implications, but is not granted, by definition and context, the sword of analyt-

¹ <http://www.ische.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/LONDON2014Abstracts-book-final.pdf> (Access April 30, 2018).

² <https://eric.ed.gov/>

ical power. Therefore, one must assume that the future perspective on «peace» is not expressed explicitly in educational research, but is mediated by several, more concrete attempts of educationalizing social problems, with the final goal of creating a peaceful future in general.

Educational research can be regarded as a kind of reflection on education within the education system and its visions and missions (Luhmann & Schorr, 2000). It not only critically analyses such normative ideas of human perfectibility and the divine child, student or adult, but mirrors the quasi-theological implications of education and follows similar patterns of thought (Keiner, 2006). This also holds true for empirical and educational research which tends to respond to external expectations and shows high resonance to public and political themes – both in the mode of traditional empirical research and in the mode of reformative reflection. In addition, it tries to better and optimise educational processes in groups, schools and classrooms, and, thus, contributes to normative ideas. The fantasy of a peaceful future which enables individuals to freely unfold their unique potential is always implicit in such ideas.

These divine missions and visions, however, often lack their silent counterparts: failure, disappointment, even the subversive movement against its own honourable intentions. In regard to education these counterparts appear at best in the form of normatively and negatively connoted attributions of students – the dropout, the truant, the underperformer, even the «included-as-excluded» – or in the form of complaints about the difficulties of working as a teacher: the stress, burnout, low payment etc. We find similar patterns when looking at educational research. One finds hardly any discussions about residuals and the «dirty backyards» of educational statistics (Stadler-Altmann & Keiner, 2010) or analyses about the weak public and academic reputation of educational research knowledge.

God and the Devil, the divine and the evil, peace and war, serve in this paper as metaphors to mark and signify special normatively bound theological and teleological ideologies and their positive or negative connotations in education and educational research.

By looking at an epistemological, a sociological and a historical perspective, the paper tries to illustrate how visions and missions of education and educational research and the education-alisation of social problems contribute to constructing positive, forward-looking theological and teleological patterns with peace and the divine human being acting as telos. It also tries to point-edly show how normative-negative elements are excluded from the educational and educational research discourse and how a «blind eye» is turned to the other side, the Devil. The paper concludes that longing for peace might be not more than one form of an educational vision of perfectibility and longing for the harmony.

1. Educationalisation of social problems

As shown before, «peace» is hardly explored explicitly, analytically and systematically as a general topic by educational research. It is transported by teleological and theological ideas of bettering and perfecting the future through more concrete attempts of educationalizing social problems in order to contribute to a peaceful future in general. The origins of this concept go back to the enlightenment, including the collective terrible experiences of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) in Central Europe, and the subsequent hopes for a better and more peaceful life on earth (and in paradise), which is expressed by the Baroque era in fine arts and music.

With enlightenment at the very latest came the great disappointment that human beings are not the centre of creation and the universe and thus have to invent and «construct» themselves (including the Cartesian doubts about the principles of construction). In view of significant tensions between the social, economic and political reality on the one side and future visions about a better reality on the other, between the actual and the potential, the present and the future, which has to be created and formed by human beings themselves, education and, later on, educational research came into play. Since a peaceful future always has been perceived as the better alternative to the present, positive, forward-looking theological and teleological patterns became an inherent and integral part of educational thinking (Tröhler, 2013). Bearing this in mind, it was Rousseau, and later on the new, progressive education starting at the end of the 19th century, being headed especially by Montessori, who emphasised the divine child (Kennedy, 1988; Williams & Foster, 1979). It has to be protected by pedagogy from the negative impact of a degenerate civilisation in order to unfold its potential and become the ideal human being. In this context the ideal teacher is constructed as a professional and reflexive helping hand in achieving an integrated, moral, individual personality – in spite of educational paradoxes like the big Kantian question of how to cultivate freedom under constraint (e.g., Schaffar, 2014). Furthermore, educational research produces and reproduces positive, forward-looking theological and teleological patterns. It aims not only at bettering the future world through education, but also through educational research. In spite of uncertainties, ignorance and insecurities about the future, about hyper-complex pedagogical situations and about the hyper-complex, unique individuals (Keiner, 2006) it cultivates the fantasy of meliorating the concrete present in the name of a vague future.

In this context peace serves both as a general (and vague) goal and a practical instrument of educationalisation. In other word, the present has to be transformed into a pedagogical one in order to implement the present means of intervention (e.g., peace education, conflict management, rhetoric, etc.), which aim to attain the imagined future as the «divine mission». Therefore, the educationalisation of social problems serves as favoured instrument to transform big soci-

etal topics, into problems of education and educational research (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2008; Keiner & Ehrenspeck, 2003).

The driving force of this transformation is «hope». According to Urs Sommer (2002), hope serves to domesticate the future with the means of today without taking the «radical other» into account. This notion of hope also indicates that education and educational research are more about reform than about revolution. Educational research does not consider the «radical other», disruption, rupture, break up, non-linear (discrete) processes and incalculable events. It lacks, so to speak, the idea of the evil, personified as the «Devil» (or etymologically probably more interesting: the ancient Greek notion of the *diabolus*). Educational Research ignores, even de-thematizes the «Devil» (Keiner, 2016) and converts the «negative» perspective into a vision of a «positive» open (and uncertain), peaceful future full of hope and promises. The vision of a peaceful world does not only serve as an utopic glimmer of hope, but also as a legitimation to discipline and structure the process of achievement of such objectives with the help of the very educational means that educational research is contributing to. Thus, the educationalisation of social problems also serves as an instrument of gaining power through education and educational research.

2. Three perspectives

In light of this we will take a look at three perspectives in order to illustrate how the education-alisation of social problems, directed towards «peace», contributes to constructing both positive, forward-looking theological and teleological patterns and to masking the other side, the Devil:

- An epistemological perspective which primarily focuses upon knowledge and knowledge theories which show how educational (research) discourse transforms social problems into educational research knowledge and contribute to a better, peaceful future;
- A sociological perspective which primarily focuses upon social contexts and sociology of knowledge which show that educational research plays an important role in educational policy, for instance through advice and expertise, which is also expected to help create a better future;
- A historical perspective which primarily focuses on historical contingencies which might have led to the current disciplinary profiles and the specific, positive normative bias of the constitution of educational research subjects. This perspective also raises the question why educational programs throughout history have developed a huge variety of different pedagogical approaches which have promised to significantly improve the future through education but have failed to do so systematically.

2.1. Epistemological perspective

From an *epistemological perspective*, we can see that educational research conceptualizes the present as a deficient mode of a better future and, therefore, aims at working on and solving social problems by means of educational research (sometimes making educational research a social problem as well).

In this respect, educational research produces structural disappointments. Educational researchers often express impatience and disappointment about the gap between good and important research results and the unwillingness or incapacity of educational practitioners or politicians to take them up (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2006; Peim, 2009; Keiner, 1999; Tenorth, 1992). In addition, this dilemma is hardly a subject of investigation and reflection, but more an impulse of new and more engagement. Such «missions» and «visions» are based on an epistemological belief, which is beyond theory and «theorisability»; singularity, hyper-complexity, unpredictability. In addition, this theoretically «empty» core offers the possibility to introduce a structural normativity of educational research arguments as a substitutive kind of normative ascription on a second level, and, at the same time, hides it from scientific methodological expectations. The normative substitute is covered by an educationalized effort, sold as «practical» research, based on principles borrowed from educational practice, which also claims being able to deal with individuals, complex situations and the (better) future and, at the same time, tries to avoid being responsible and accountable for failures as it emphasizes the impossibility to imitate and predict educational results (Keiner, 2006; see also Lortie, 2002).

In addition, the autonomy of educational research as an academic field is not very high. According to Bourdieu (1998), the degree of the autonomy of a scientific field is defined by its ability to break external expectations or requests into a specific form, which constitutes its «logic of work». The decisive indicator of the degree of autonomy of any given field is its breaking strength, its translation capacity, i.e., the degree to which educational research is able to claim educational themes and problems as educational ones – in demarcation to e.g. psychological, sociological or political ones.

As the autonomy of educational research as an academic field within the scientific system is not very high, the translation of external expectations of problem solving into the own disciplinary pattern of scholarly argumentation does not primarily work according to the logic of research. It follows more so the logic of relativizing, adjusting, reformulating, and reflecting these external expectations in the direction of education, promotion and improvement, combining expertise, mission and vision. This transformation may be called the educationalisation of social problems. It is based on the hope of creating peace and a peaceful context (in a rather vague sense), in which the individuals can develop and create their own peaceful future. In educa-

tional contexts – via the teacher’s substitutional interpretation of the child’s future (Oevermann, 1996) – the present world usually is perceived as a deficient mode of an alternative, better, more peaceful one. Therefore, the educationalisation of various social problems is not only a preferred educational answer to societal challenges, but also a powerful tool to secularise and socially coordinate pedagogical mission and vision. Teachers, so to speak, coordinate transitions from the present to the imagined future. They manage uncertainty, and, therefore, exert power, as «power is control of uncertainty» (Crozier & Friedberg, 1980).

If education as an academic field of study and research follows this pattern, it mirrors the problems of education and pedagogy, participating parasitically in these fantasies of power. In addition, educational research incorporates a broad range of normative orientations, as is shown not only in semantically rather unspecific core concepts (Keiner, 1999, 2015), but also in debates about goals, in the topics of «reform» and «tasks», in the problematic relationship of theory and practice or in its high «resonance ability for public and political themes» (Stroß & Thiel, 1998: 16). Because of this high-resonance capacity and reformative reflection, educational researchers often actively participate in shifting the boundaries between politics, economy, and education, in order to contribute to an open and peaceful future.

In conclusion, the epistemological perspective shows an educational (research) knowledge pattern with a strong normative bias. It aims at elaborating and perfecting human beings and cultivates a hopeful, future-oriented, normatively positive perspective, which is more engaged in favouring the true, the good and the beautiful (Goethe) than the wrong, the bad and the ugly – which a detached scientific or scholarly view would have to consider also.

2.2. Sociological perspective

Although the epistemological profile of educational research and its research results seem to be «weak» (as compared to the research standards in psychology, the social sciences and the humanities (Knaupp, Schaufler, Hofbauer, & Keiner, 2014), the discipline appears rather powerful if one considers the participation of educational researchers in policy debates, panels etc. (Keiner & Tenorth, 2007).

Contrary to the usual complaints and prevalent self-pity, educational research has gained in power and autonomy. Educational research governs its internal structures and hierarchies according to self-controlled quality factors. Theoretical and methodological mainstream and niches co-exist with approval of existing structures and resistance against external pressure, for instance economic coercion. Participation in European Union projects like PERINE (Pedagogical and Educational Research Information Network for Europe) or EUDISED (European Documentation and

Information System for Education) subsequently led to a big EU project, supported and managed by the European Educational Research Association (EERA). The project, named EERQI (European Educational Research Quality Indicators), tried to initiate some necessary changes and to open the discussion about research quality indicators (Gogolin, 2016; Botte, 2014; Bridges, 2009). This historical development, from an educational research information network and system for education to a body developing educational research quality indicators, proves the increasing self-control of educational research quality. In addition, it indicates a process of professionalization and structuring of educational research by setting research quality standards and performance measurement indicators as well. This increasing self-control and professionalization also contributes to self-confidence and self-accountability in regard to managing conflicts and problems and thus contributes to pacifying the discipline's internal structure.

Furthermore, educational research is an irreplaceable partner to educational policy and public agencies and in high demand to give necessary expertise. Educational researchers are significantly involved in large scale assessment projects, for example, run by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) which are responsible for managing PISA and other educational relevant projects or run by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) which manages the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). On European, national and regional levels of education policy decision making, educational researchers are wanted as experts as well. The OECD explicitly asks for a stronger relationship between researchers, policy makers and stakeholders. The programmatic outlook of a book, edited by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) and titled *Evidence in Education: Linking Research and Policy* (Burns, 2007) outlines such expectations in the direction of improving education worldwide.

Education policies and systems in all OECD countries are coming under increasing pressure to show greater accountability and effectiveness. However, the information readily available for policy-making is often unsuitable, either because the rigorous research required for policy needs has not been conducted, or because the research that is available is contradictory and does not suggest a single course of action. It is crucial that educational policy decisions are made based on the best evidence possible. [This book] brings together international experts on evidence-informed policy in education from a wide range of OECD countries. The report looks at the issues facing educational policy makers, researchers, and stakeholders – teachers, media, and parents – in using evidence to best effect. It focuses on the challenge of effective brokering between policy makers and researchers, offers specific examples of major policy-related research, and presents perspectives from several senior politicians. This book provides a fresh outlook on key issues facing policy makers, researchers and school leaders today. (Burns, 2007)

However, not all educational researchers are willing to fulfil these expectations as they critically assume that they will lose their scholarly independence and critical autonomy when work-

ing too closely with educational policy makers and administrators. A good indicator for such resistance is the comprehensive discussion about evidence-based reform in education, e.g., the controversy between Slavin (2008) and Bridges (2008) or the Roundtable about «Evidence and Policy Research» (Schuller, Jochems, Moos, & Van Zanten, 2006), but also critical analyses about new forms of global knowledge processing, homogenisation and strategies of legitimation (e.g., see the recently published special issue of EERJ, 3, 2018 on Transnational Actors in the Multi-Level Governance of Knowledge; Fumasoli, Stensaker, & Vukasovic, 2018; Ozga, Seddon, & Popkewitz, 2006; Keiner, 2011). However, the existing group of researchers who sceptically continue to resist the instrumentalisation of educational research for political and administrative purposes also indicates that there is a growing group of other educational researchers who cooperate with politicians, administrators, stakeholders and international and national organisations in order to improve education. This increased networking, therefore, defines educational research as reliable and jointly responsible for working towards a better, peaceful future and thus contributing to the empowerment of the discipline's external structure.

Therefore, from a sociological perspective, we can see a significant trend of networking, creating mixed roundtables of researchers, politicians and stakeholders, who are jointly working on the already mentioned vision and mission of improving the world through education. Such blurring of particular interests, differences and functions provides high public legitimation and power, but also serve as a strategy of immunisation against critical interjections. The normative promise to save the world streamlines all efforts towards a positive and divine future, whereas the other side of the coin, the Devil remains invisible.

2.3. Historical perspective

From a *historical point of view* it is striking to see that over the last 150 years we find a huge amount of promises to save the world through education. The long epoch (or still ongoing project) of progressive education, which started at the end of the 19th century, developed a lot of theories, concepts, programs and even examples of best practice. All of them have been (and still are) deeply rooted in normative, theological and teleological visions and missions to save the world (at least the children) and to create a peaceful future through education. In spite of some elements which have been taken up in regular schools and kindergartens, none of these visionary educational concepts has been systematically and structurally implemented into regular schools. Why is that? The concepts remain dreams without analyses of their failures, and they became glamorized, glorified, worshipped as heroic and deified by condensing the concepts to big names – Montessori, Steiner, Parkhurst, Freinet, Neill, etc. The large extent to which

educational research refers to historical «educational heroes», e.g., in scholarly journals, indicates a process of identity construction, of «disciplinisation» through «traditionalisation», but to a certain degree ignores sound historical educational research. This raises the question to what extent we ourselves (as educational researchers) contribute to and are part of these problems.

The historical perspective, therefore, shows to which extent educational research itself contributes to a promising peaceful future, fostering divine visions and missions of ameliorating the world through education more than it contributes to «evil», i.e., critical and disappointing analyses about «Why “What Works” doesn’t work» (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2006).

The degree of explicit and implicit normative, even theological implications of educational research is not only a denominational question (e.g., Oelkers, Osterwalder, & Tenorth, 2003; Tröhler, 2008, 2013; or Goldner, Ritti, & Ference, 1977), but basically also an ethical one, which is assumed to form and constitute the core of educational thinking. We find normative, positively connoted implications, for example regarding «political correctness» where euphemistic concepts (e.g., peace, but also inclusion or special needs) obscure other more realistic concepts (e.g., conflicts and war, but also exclusion or handicaps) or regarding the function of education and educational research for supporting fashionable trends (e.g., the concept of «evidence-based» mentioned above). We find such positive, teleological and theologically driven connotations as well in the idea of «lifelong learning» which I will shortly take up as an example to show the ideological implications of the basic idea of providing peace and perfecting human beings and societies through education.

3. Lifelong learning and longing for harmony

As already mentioned, educational thinking is based on ideas of future, continuity, hope and linear expectations. Education and educational research in history and present times are based on normative ideas of perfecting human beings (and societies), a goal that supposedly will be achieved with the help of and ending up in peace. One finds these fantasies and ideals also in the concept of the information or knowledge society, in rhetorical constructions and concepts about lifelong learning, in the paradox of competition and cooperation and in ambivalent images of the desired self. I chose the topic of «lifelong learning» as an example to illustrate the quasi-theological implications lifelong learning is based on.

Since late antiquity and early medieval times the concept of an ideal human as an *imago dei* (a likeness of God) was the prevailing point of reference for educational imagination; God promises and guarantees peace. In modern times this concept became secularised – the human being had to invent and construct him-/herself without having a transcendent entity at their dis-

posol. People had to create their own ideal version of self *imago homini* (in the likeness of the self-constructed ideal human) which then became an unattainable point of reference regarding the individual life course. Peace became a challenge humans had to take into their own hands. In this context, the claim and requirement of perfection through education and self-perfection, e.g., through lifelong learning, remained and is still a great part of the EU education program.

The continuous acquisition of competences is the great promise of lifelong learning and of an individual and collective peaceful future. The European Union defines lifelong learning as «all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective»³. A more precise look, however, shows that the most important indicator for lifelong learning success is acquiring another certificate. These certificates usually promise that individuals have learned another set of skills indicated by courses, workload and examinations completed. However, this promise is not based on any empirical evidence that the certifying institution shows responsibility or even accountability for the outcome. Therefore, certificates merely confirm and attest the individual's contribution to the universal expectation of being on the way to his/her own perfection, but not whether the individual has indeed acquired the certified competences. Certainly, the certifying organization is not asked to assume any liability for the successful acquisition of new competences. Certificates do not only function as media of allocation, but also as indicators of cumulatively raising the bar to self-perfection and self-appeasement. The acquirement of certificates, therefore, also helps to appease the individual's fear of being (or being considered) lazy, egoistic and not working on self-improvement. In other words, certificates indicating knowledge and competences, serve as a «modern» ideology, a universal expectation asking individuals to learn, to cooperate, to compete and, finally, to feel responsible and accountable for constructing their own vita and for co-constructing a peaceful and successful society.

In these respects certificates can not only be seen as convertible money – similar to the financial industry. They also can be conceived and interpreted as «modern letters of indulgence», expressed in purchasable certificates promising a better life in the future. In medieval times indulgences promised an easier way to paradise, with help of praying and paying. It was Luther who seriously fought against this catholic-papist «market of indulgences». Luther also fought for an «education for all» in order to prepare individuals for perceiving and accepting god's grace and to live a good and peaceful life on earth (Weber, 2005). In medieval times the indulgences' return was expected after life, in the anticipated paradise; in modern times people expect the reward while still alive as a return on their investment in their own refinement and perfection. Against this background modern lifelong learning certificates can be seen as modern indulgences

³ http://www.eucam.org/context.lifelong_learning.php (access April 17, 2018).

which indicate human effort and investment in self-perfection, which – as a secularized return – promises a better life, if not the «paradise on earth».

Conclusion

Education and educational research produce and reproduce positive, forward-looking theological and teleological patterns aiming at bettering the future world through education. They cultivate the fantasy of meliorating the actual present in the name of a vague, peaceful future. This ideology is driven by hope in view of a future which is by definition insecure and uncertain. This frightening prospect gets «domesticated» through present-day means, e.g., through substitutional interpretations of possible futures for children, youth and adults. Furthermore, educationalisation of social problems serves as an instrument to transform present social and societal problems into educational problems in order to create a better and more peaceful future through education.

An epistemological perspective shows educational research knowledge patterns with a strong normative bias, emphasising positively connoted future aspects and ignoring negatively connoted elements, which a detached scientific view would also have to consider. From a sociological perspective these cognitive patterns are embedded in and related to networking and roundtables of different actors, groups and interests. They repeat the normative bias by blurring social roles and forms of knowledge, which as a consequence gain in public legitimation and power. The historical perspective draws attention to the fact that the history of education is full of visions and missions, programs and ideas, reforms and reflections – not only in the context of progressive education. However, none of these glorified educational programs has become structurally and systematically implemented into educational practice. The representatives of these programs were turned into educational heroes, which indicates the longing for a disciplinary identity and a positive historiography more than a critical analysis of blind spots and failures.

To prove these points a close look was taken at lifelong learning as an example of a popular method of improvement. Again, the ideology of self-perfection follows the normative bias; the acquisition and distribution of modern lifelong learning certificates can – in historical analogy – be interpreted as modern trade in letters of indulgence.

We hardly find any detached, critical, even playful analyses about «Why “What Works” doesn’t work» (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2006). We are hard-pressed to come up with any mythological or literary characters which could serve as metaphors for a place «in between» or even beyond the distinction between the positive and the negative, the God and the Devil, e.g., the character of Sisyphus or the one of Gulliver (Bernfeld, 1973; Camus, 1955; Swift, 2005). What we find is a

vague and less explicit normative idea of longing for peace and a peaceful future, which serves as a teleological and theological point of reference for education and educational research.

However, we find this «longing for the harmonies», for perfection, peace and unity not only in education and educational research, but also for example in physics. Starting from the classical, fundamental Leibniz's question – why is there something rather than nothing? – the 2004 Nobel Prize winner Frank Wilczek and Betsy Devine (1987) published a popular science book about the «grand unified theory» or about the master «theory of everything» under the title *Longing for the Harmonies*. It was not by chance that the authors chose «harmony» as a metaphor relevant also in music, arts and aesthetic theory because, in fact, the «longing for the harmonies» presupposes theoretical and practical dissonances, contradictions and paradoxes.

Therefore, we should be aware of the fact that pacifism and longing for peace produce their own paradoxes, antinomies and contradictions when the discussion about the best methods to make these ideals, visions and missions come true begins. In this perspective, God and the Devil, mission and failure, ideal and reality, peace and war should systematically be analysed as parts of the «system of paradoxes» education and educational research is based on more and more in modern times.

«Longing for the harmonies» tries to avoid paradoxes and contradictions, for example, through the «repatriation of difference» (Appadurai, 1990: 307). Projections into the future avoid empirical confrontation with dissonance and allow the romantic construction of the better «other», which, however, is not the irritating «stranger» as the construction of the «other» is based on contemporary, familiar elements. Peace, education, love, upbringing, hope and other big concepts serve as all-compassing metaphors. However, they also serve – metaphorically speaking – as seals, as inlays, which help us to take comfort in view of imperfectness and barbarism and help us to avoid, at least to alleviate, the pain in view of all the frictions and irritations we experience between hope and enlightenment, camouflage and obscurity and its dialectics (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1991).

Therefore, I opt for strengthening a transversal, (meta-) reflexive, communicative and playful perspective (probably just like the traditional *disputatio*, an intellectually and secular refined form of the interplay between the *advocatus dei* and the *advocatus diaboli*) or a concept related to a «reflexive modernity» [Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994]). An ambivalent, balancing, dialectic perspective would avoid an ideological and strained «longing for the harmonies», e.g., peace, freedom and happiness, in the future. Education and educational research would volunteer to be questioned and evaluated as the optimum means to achieve that envisioned future. Once dialectic, analytical and empirical approaches gain in strength normative, teleological and theological implications would become suppositions to be investigated and explained. In short: we are better off to defend the critical, ambivalent and dialectical questions, paradoxes and diffi-

culties against the rash, unambiguous and cheap answers, assertions and simplifications we get when the longing for peace and the educationalisation of social problems clouds our ability to witness, learn and judge.

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