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editorial: education and the public sphere

On Education

Democracy and education depend on a well-functioning public sphere and adequately informed, educated, participating citizens. There is consensus that the relationship between education and the public sphere can be seen as a fundamental question of educational reflection, which is constantly changing. It is still an open question which effects the digitalization or the pluralistic structure of societies have on education and the public sphere. The 14th edition of On Education takes up these debates with contributions which explore understandings of 'the public sphere', and further the understanding of the relationship between the public sphere and education in different historical, cultural, and pedagogical contexts.

Keywords: conceptions of democracy, digitalization, education, globailzation, public sphere

Historically, the connection and interplay between education and the public sphere is highly complex. The emergence of public education was closely linked to the transformation of knowledge during the Enlightenment and to the formation of the nation-state. As the "semantic child of the Enlightenment", the public sphere developed into the critical normative authority that had to liberate education from the "arcana of domestic and absolutist education" (Amos et al., 2011, p. 10). This idea and ideal of a critical and not just receptive public sphere, as it was reconstructed by Jürgen Habermas (1990), plays an important role in contemporary discussions about deliberative conceptions of democracy (Landemore, 2020) and education (Drerup, 2020). According to this tradition, liberal democracies are crucially dependent on a well-functioning public sphere, which in turn relies on the educational formation of adequately informed and educated citizens, who are able and willing to participate reflexively in the public sphere by articulating their concerns in collective deliberations about political issues.

Despite significant differences in the historical development of the relationship between education and the public sphere in different sociopolitical contexts (Biesta et al., 2021) as well as competing (normative) reconstructions of the specific political functions and educational preconditions of the public sphere, there is a widespread consensus in educational theory that the relationship between education and the public sphere can be regarded as one of the central questions of educational reflection (Grümme, 2018, p. 10). The controversy over the place and role of education in the public sphere currently primarily focusses on what has been described as a 'new structural change of the public sphere' which enfolds in the context of processes of digitalization (Binder & Oelkers, 2017; Sunstein, 2007; 2017; Habermas, 2021; Bernholz, Landemore & Reich, 2021). The current technological changes and their consequences for education and almost all other spheres of life can be compared to the invention of the printing press, and we are just beginning to understand the long-term transformations that go along with this process. Do we need an entirely new theoretical understanding of the relationship between education, the political and the digital public sphere? The

same applies to plural societies, in which more and more groups are making their concerns heard. The question "What is the common good of education?" becomes much more difficult to answer as debates and needs become more diverse (Gutmann, 1995; Allen, 2016).

Does it still make sense to speak of a singular 'public sphere' or should we rather speak of plural publics or mini-publics and does this undermine the traditional dichotomy between *the* public and *the* private sphere? Finally, globalization is challenging all liabilities on which public education is traditionally based (Papastephanou, 2005; Culp, 2019). Should it therefore turn completely to cosmopolitan or humanistic ideals and abandon the idea of a confined public sphere?

The 14th edition of On Education takes up these debates and invites contributions which explore understandings of "the public sphere", further the understanding of the relationship between the public sphere and education in different historical, cultural, and pedagogical contexts, reflect on the relationship between educational and democratic theory, or discuss changing relationships between education and the public against the backdrop of the digital transformation, globalization, pluralization, and political as well as economic changes.

The Editorial Team

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