

Book reviews

Colom, T., Sarramona, J. & Vázquez, G. (2023).

Reflexión y práctica pedagógica [Pedagogical reflection and practice].

Horsori. 154 pp.

Pedagogical reflection and practice is the latest publication by three authors who have considerable experience and notable careers, characterised by underlining and publicising the connections between educational theory and practice. An approach that, while may not surprise people from other fields, is not common in the world of pedagogy.

It is true that, in recent times, the need to link theory-reflection-research with praxis, experience and contextualisation has been demanded in many educational innovation projects. This, however, has not been translated into concrete pedagogical proposals. Hence the value of the present work. Hence the value of this work.

The book we discuss here is divided into three chapters. In the first, Toni Colom considers the theory of science and the theory of education from an epistemological perspective. He provides a systematic overview of this debate, embodied in the proposals by Mario Bunge and Karl Popper, through which he delves into the complexity of education from a preferably qualitative approach. This enables him to respond to what escapes logical linearity. In other words, he is oriented towards a singular, unfathomable, and unknown self-organisation, with the various contributions of Humberto Maturana and Edgar Morin, among others. The author reminds us that education is hazardous and complex. Therefore, educational realities must be approached with an open and undefined structure of knowledge. All of this leads us to the current debate about the possible innovations that will have to be implemented when tools such as ChatGPT or similar are present in classrooms. We will

have to explore the dimension of what is “undefined” in the broadest extent of the concept, creating opportunities for challenges that are hard to predict.

Afterwards, Colom proceeds to bring all of the discourse about the origin and evolution of the theory of education towards its material existence, towards its practical application, both in regards to the material objects through which we teach and to the individuals who are at the centre of this process (without them, there is no education, as the author reminds us). Furthermore, in order to be able to advance, this practice must be based on critical reflection, on moral-axiological criteria that address teachers in their day-to-day work. We are also reminded that pedagogical practice starts from a technological foundation to locate this practical-reflexive orientation in the interests of a pragmatic instrumentalization. At this point, James and Dewey are mentioned as some of the authors who represent this basis.

In the second chapter, Gonzalo Vázquez takes up Colom’s idea of technological reason. He suggests that the link between theory and practice is to be found in the principles and strategies implemented in different learning situations. For example, in the use of experiences (as a Deweyian concept) and/or simulations to be able to reach the desired transference, put in place and increased in a variety of educational settings through this technology. All of this is with the basic idea of incorporating processes of dialogue (internal and external) through observation, on condition that it is supported and corrected by critical, informed reflection. The author places particular emphasis on how emotions, both individual and group, contribute as a fundamental part of learning processes, underlining their undoubted impact in deep learning. Therefore, it is vitally important to be able to put in place the conditions, both internal and external, for self-knowledge.

It is on self-knowledge that the author bases the idea of maturity and cognitive equilibrium. This is of special interest for training our future teachers, individuals who encounter the dilemmas typical of this changing and sometimes bleak society. One example of this is the current debate over artificial intelligence, which brings us closer to what is unplanned, to what has not yet happened. Having a new, privileged window, even if it exceeds human cognition in speed on many levels, elicits as much wonder as insecurity. However, it is another element for shaping principles and strategies between educational theory and mindful, effective, and rigorous practice. As Vázquez notes, educational action presents the two faces of Janus: it is at, the same time, structuring and unbalancing, although we would add that it is also vibrant.

The proposal closes with a third chapter which focusses on what its author, Jaume Sarramona, calls the “materialisation of educational action”. The fact is that theory contributes (as it should) to transforming reality, to making each student’s learning possible from his or her own context and uniqueness. The author meticulously addresses and expands the materialisation of theory as “form”, presenting the meaningful elements that comprise the action of professionalism in teachers. And with this intent, he positions the activity of didactic planning as the heart of school educational practice.

It is strongly recommended that teachers with little experience and also those with most expertise carefully read all of the key elements that must be taken into account in classroom planning, which the author spells out and, more notably, how all of them are given a sequenced time and space throughout the educational process.

Sarramona analyses the extent to which planning is a sign of professionalism in teachers. He follows the principles of prediction and precaution, but also included the artistic and creative aspect, in order to be able to give way to the necessary capacity for flexibility that continuous learning requires. Planning and, at the same time, being flexible in order to be able to approach the purposes of education. In this way, the questions of why we have to educate and what we educate for can be answered. Planning and flexibility to personalise learning with a variety of strategies and resources that the author offers with clear summary schemes, based on practical formulations and advice with various resources.

Evaluation is shown to be a process that cuts across all of the planned didactic sequence. This evaluation’s main objective is to help students in their process of self-regulation. This evaluation must be at the heart of the rhythm and style of all learning, requiring teachers to construct instruments for systematic observation that make it possible to measure results and verify the fitness of the educational materialisation as proposed and implemented.

Toni J. Colom, J. Sarramona, and G. Vázquez offer us wise pages in this joint book that combine theoretical knowledge and a practice-based outlook, a valuable tool for current and future teachers, as well as for the people who train them.

**Dr Isabel Alvarez i Canovas
and Dr Joana Ferrer i Miquel ■**

Berkowitz, M. W. (2022).

Modelo PRIMED para la educación del carácter. Seis principios esenciales para la mejora escolar [PRIMED for character education: Six design principles for school improvement]. EUNSA. 355 pp.

To be, or not to be, that is the question. As it is in character education as well. In his pedagogical research, Marvin Berkowitz reduces the problem he confronts to its most basic components, as Shakespeare already did in the field of literature, and, in so doing, uncovers the metaphysical scope of his professional endeavour. In the case of *PRIMED for character education*, this undertaking is based on teaching and, as noted above, appeals to what is most radical, which is “how to be” and “how to live” (p. 4). Throughout this work, this is precisely a matter of attaining an effective practice to achieve “the flourishing of human goodness in schools” (p. 4), which is what gives most meaning to people’s life and being. This goodness is considered in the spirit of his book as “the inclination and capacity to make the world a more just and compassionate place for everyone and for that to be central to one’s sense of self” (p. 16). The purpose of this publication, expressed in more detail, is set out straightforwardly: “how we can build a better world through understanding, committing to, and acting upon what is most effective in nurturing the flourishing of human goodness, especially in kids” (p. 3). Through guidelines and specific examples largely implemented by notable or pioneering educators, Berkowitz clarifies the most appropriate way to achieve this objective of goodness, which must emanate from the “inner core, in other words, our character” (p. 4).

Modelo PRIMED para la educación del carácter is marked by great sharpness of ideas, fluent exposition, and conceptual clarity. It revolves around six central ideas that are, as the subtitle states, the six essential principles for improving schools. PRIMED, in fact, is an acronym based on these six ideas or “design principles” that connect “to guide the construction of an comprehensive, evidence-based, and effective character education initiative” (p. 172). These principles are priority, relationship building, intrinsic motivation, modelling goodness, empowering students, and developmental (pedagogy), as stated in the book’s table of contents. The author devotes a chapter to each of these elements, divided in turn into multiple sub-sections. Similarly, the detailed explanation of these six essential nuclei is preceded by an introductory chapter and is rounded off, in a final section, by a series of closing considerations and notes summarising what has been presented. The book has a total of eight parts or chapters.

In line with the above, it could be said that the author proposes a guide for “effective” character education that illuminates and makes it possible to intervene in how “we *be* with others and then what we *do* as a consequence” (p. 5) in the context of achieving goodness in the learning of children and adolescents, the fundamental objective of the book. Indeed, “effective practice, grounded in deep understanding, is the heart of this book” (p. 4). Consequently, there can be no opposition between being and doing: “we want a synergy between being and doing and having it all grounded in a deep understanding (knowing) of character, character development, and character education” (p. 7). However, there is a precedence of being over doing and, specifically, of teachers’ being over their formative (or better performative) activities in students. In effect, it “is first of all a matter of *being* and then a matter of doing” (p. 4). In other words: “If we want to redesign schools or classrooms, we have to first redesign ourselves... *our way of being*” (p. 6). The question, of course, is how we go about doing this task. If Berkowitz takes us away from something in this book, it is the idea that there is a handbook to be applied directly or instantly that leads to achieving the desired product: “schools make the mechanical mistake all the time” (p. 6) when, in reality, “there are no simple litmus tests of character” (p. 131). As Berkowitz observes, “understanding what will effectively foster character development in schools [...] is a much more complex chore and will be the focus of most of the rest of this book” (p. 19). The methodological error described above, which

is mechanistic in nature, is subsidiary to another that consists of wanting to find solutions to problems where it is perhaps most logical to look for them, but where, in reality, they are not found; in this way, teachers and institutions have often “been focusing instead on some of the well-intentioned but ineffective character education practices” (p. 8). In this regard, “PRIMED is a framework for creating classrooms and schools, which are places where educators and students want to be” (p. 172). However, for a task like this, as noted above, everything must start with the transformation of the personal being of the teachers; a *good* metamorphosis of this type would serve as an example for character education and would favour the transfer to the children of knowledge from the curriculum. Indeed, one of the mantras that Berkowitz repeats most often is that “kids don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care”, as children are “hypocrisy detectives” (p. 125).

For the author of this book, truly educating means educating *with* the students. Nonetheless, this requires people who are capable of promoting such an undertaking, who are well trained, and who have a talent for leadership that people want to imitate: “students see and hear all you do and say and remember it” (p. 128). Consequently, “character education starts in your mirror [...] it must start with the adults” (p. 127), as there can never be “a great school without a great leader, and [...] never [...] a great character education school without a great character educator as the leader” (p. 61). At an institutional level, the main general methodological challenge for the management of educational centres is to discover how to integrate character education with the curriculum effectively, in a way that is effective for development, which is critical for a structural support that makes it possible to prioritise character education.

Regarding the six PRIMED principles set out above, “prioritising” character education implies that it is not principally a means for academic success but that, above all, we must value nourishing goodness simply because goodness matters. However, if prioritisation must be effective in order to have performative reach in the being of the students, “it should be clear that it is important to talk about about character and to have useful language with which to do so. Core character concepts are certainly a main part of that” (p. 43). In this regard, Berkowitz notes the importance of taking inspiration in pre-established guidelines-works to direct us in the task of forging a noble and

good character, such as the six pillars of character of Character Counts or the publications of Character.org. With regards to the “relationship building” principle, it must be a true priority for character education to be successful; therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind that “the real trick here is that relationship building [...] must include all in the school and ideally stakeholders outside the school as well” (p. 80). The third fulcrum of PRIMED is “intrinsic motivation”; in this sense, if our character resides within us and we want to change it, we have to aim at what is inside us. Applied to pupils, we have to discover how to make them internalise what we teach and model. In fourth place, there is the relevance of the “modelling”, which, *grosso modo*, has already been set out and which, ultimately, is a transversal factor as, if mechanismism is rejected when achieving character education objectives, one of the operative roads that appears before us is mimesis or modelling. The fifth PRIMED standard (“empowering”) illustrates the vital importance of involving students in education and in the management of the school. Faced with the prejudices of “adulthood”, based on the false belief that they are incapable, too immature, it must be accepted that sharing power brings many challenges, but is necessary for character education. Finally, through the “pedagogy of development”, all of the PRIMED structure will be directed at being implemented in the ever-increasing direction, the future, which frames how we educate, with a long-term view and not statically; in effect, children (adults as well, ultimately) are in a process of ascent towards new reference points in their journey of development and pedagogical strategies must be applied to achieve them.

In summary: *Modelo PRIMED para la educación del carácter* urges us to reconsider our approach to classical educational problems and offers us a theoretical-practical framework for solving these challenges in a non-mechanical way, characterised by a conceptual toolkit with a deep philosophical basis. Indeed, according to Berkowitz, character education can only be effectively implemented when the personal being of the teacher and of the school can be modelled in the student learner. However, doing this requires transforming the innermost being of the students towards goodness, something that can only take place thanks to a positive prior metamorphosis: that of the character of the person of the teacher.

Unai Buil Zamorano ■

Rivas, S. & García-Diego, H. (Eds.) (2022).

Escenarios de aprendizaje. Diálogos entre arquitectura, diseño y educación [Educational settings: Dialogues between architecture, design, and education].

Tirant lo Blanch. 409 pp.

In a post-pandemic setting that has required the re-formulation of teaching-learning spaces, the pedagogue Sonia Rivas and the architect Héctor García-Diego have published the book *Educational settings: Dialogues between architecture, design, and education*. Although interest in the influence of space on the quality of teaching-learning processes was already present in educational discussions, the context of the health crisis has brought it to the forefront. The book starts from the change in paradigm in the understanding of homes, which were traditionally spaces dedicated to privacy, rest, and family life but have become places for work and study; and how spaces traditionally designed for learning (universities and schools) have been permeated by the need to be places that are accommodating, livable, and capable of embracing vulnerability. The emergency situation and the experience of the summer course on the dialogue between education and architecture organised by the editors at the Universidad de Navarra after the lockdown of 2020, provide a justification and purpose for this book.

Throughout the book, the etymological and necessary connection between the verbs “to learn” and “to inhabit” in Spanish (‘aprender’ / ‘habitar’) is repeatedly mentioned. What is learnt is absorbed insofar as it is inhabited (it becomes a habit) and possessed through the senses. Similarly, the spaces where this happens are directly influenced by the greater or lesser possibilities of time and space that architecture facilitates. The value of this book (which features a prologue, an introduction, and twelve chapters) lies both in the contributions made by the twenty-one authors who have participated from the fields of education and architecture and/or design (nine chapters are collaborations between authors from each discipline) and in its editing. Architecture and education open up to each other in a complementary and, at the same time, unifying dialogue.

Stephen Heppell, the author of the prologue, opens by setting out what he believes will be the educational challenges of the next seventy-five years. The innovative focus is the handling of the undeniable paradigm shift that digital tools and social media have introduced both in the endeavour of learning and in comprehension of the material world. Distance learning, which

has a long history, is something more than real in recent years, as Alexi Marmot explains in the introduction. By its very nature, distance learning does not happen in a formal architectural space. Hence the response that Rivas and García-Diego offer in chapter eight on the possibilities and needs for transformation of homes that are the site of remote work and/or learning activities (whether through unavoidable circumstances, like the pandemic, or by choice, for example studying a MOOC) and they open a debate on the best material conditions (light, furnishings, space) and environmental ones (order, routines, and family dynamics) for this to be a success.

The book does not present a linear argument and the chapters do not share a single theory of education or architecture. However, certain questions, reflections, and concepts underlie all of them. One of these is the post-modern concern with ecology and learning. Although also forming part of its relationship with the environment, ecology refers to the question of the total growth of the person in relation to its own nature. Juliette Heppell sets out the case of the Brightlingsea Beach School based on the learning outside the classroom (LoC) methodology. In chapter four, Carolina Ugarte and Jorge Tárrago Mingo consider the impact that architectural spaces open to the outdoors and in connection with nature have on learning and on well-being and the evidence for this. Chapters eleven and twelve implicitly illustrate this concept of ecology in the relationship between architecture and special educational needs. Ligia Solís Salido and María Villanueva Fernández provide valuable examples of typical school furnishings that facilitate concentration for students with ADHD. In addition, the architect Miguel A. Alonso del Val describes the design process followed in the Andrés Muñoz Garde special education centre in Pamplona.

As noted above, methodological and architectural proposals need to go hand in hand to create learning spaces that open their doors to vulnerability, personal development, and the connection with the other or with the task in hand. So, the chapter by Stephen Heppell and Farid Mokhtar Noriega provides a holistic analysis of healthy learning environments. Also, in chapter three, Pablo Campos Calvo-Sotelo and Laura Luceño-Casals consider this when providing an overview of training places for creative specialities in the university (in this

case, for degrees in architecture and fashion) while stating how these spaces influence meaningful learning.

The combination of principles and retrospective examination of practical experiences in Rosan Bosch's contribution in chapter two (where she shows how pedagogical principles guide the design of learning spaces in her studio) makes this a good companion for chapter nine, by María Villanueva Fernández and Sonia Lara Ros. Architecture and pedagogy suggest the potential of architecture in the development of creativity in the triad of society-school-classroom through different examples of reference schools in the USA, Finland, and the Netherlands. Similarly, the essentially theoretical chapter by Carmen Urpí Guercia and Clara Eslava Cabanellas is of special value as it reclaims and explains in Spanish the diagrams John Dewey proposed in *Art as Experience* (1934) for organising the school.

As is apparent, the book's structure means the chapters can be read in the order proposed or readers can plot their own course and see the connections between them. The discussion between Ana Costa Paris and Juan Miguel Otxotorena EliceGUI on how educational theories transform how spaces are understood is based on the presentation of a university centre and a school designed by Otxotorena. This chapter also comes relates to the one written as a dialogue between Santiago Atrio and Jaime Úbeda. The authors ask each other questions and answer them, and so the reader finally concludes that there is a need to situate human educability as a guiding vector when generating architectural proposals.

As a systemic reality in which many factors are at play and responsibilities are shared, education ultimately desires the habitation of its spaces. Spaces that have been questioned and transformed as a result of social and cultural changes in recent decades, and which will continue to be questioned and transformed in coming decades. This scenario requires this dialogue and comprehension between educators and architects, beyond the principles given by their respective disciplines. The converging approach this book proposes opens up a broad outlook to other dialogic approaches of this type.

Carmen María Basanta Vázquez ■

