
Book reviews

Ibáñez-Martín, J. A. (2017).

Horizontes para los educadores.

Las profesiones educativas y la promoción de la plenitud humana

[*Horizons for educators:*

Educational professions and

the promotion of human plenitude].

Madrid: Dykinson. 282 pp.

A review should start with an overview of the book, and then a more detailed analysis of its parts and chapters. This book considers *the current educational situation*, describes it, analyses it in-depth, and makes a variety of interesting arguments. In other words, anyone who reads this book by Ibáñez-Martín, an Emeritus Professor at the Madrid Complutense University, will know what the author has done over the years: study.

This book, *Horizontes para los educadores. Las profesiones educativas y la promoción de la plenitud humana*, comprises four parts as well as a prologue and an introduction. While it will prob-

ably not be the author's last work – it is to be hoped that he will continue writing so that we can learn from his writings – it could be described as monumental, a compendium of an entire academic life in 17 chapters, 271 pages, 413 notes, and, as if that were not enough, a 7-page index of names in two columns, something that is always appreciated. In brief, this book is undoubtedly very important and will clearly continue to be so for a long time.

It is also worth noting some formal aspects of varying degrees of interest. Firstly, it does not employ the widely-used generic APA citation system. This means that the author provides the precise page, paragraph, or line of the reference, direct or otherwise. This level of intellectual honesty is rare nowadays. Furthermore, thanks to his lengthy career of serious accumulated scholarship, Ibáñez-Martín offers thorough scrutiny of each topic, including its international trajectories, how interest in it has risen and fallen, important milestones, monographs, influential conferences, and,

most importantly, in all cases, the first authors to start working on the topics or the ideas under discussion. Here this honesty is combined with avoidance of the butterfly-like style often found in academic writings that constantly flitting from one trend to another, or, rather from one funding source to another.

This careful examination makes it possible to identify another very important common factor; the different topics covered in their different chapters combine to offer a national and international state of the question, sometimes through a flood of chronologically presented reading, or, more often, through a series of paragraphs, each of which expresses one of the dominant and most widely used arguments about the central topic of the chapter. The question of whether they are correct is settled later. It is important to note that a historiographic examination of the question under discussion is not the same as the discussion itself. Ultimately, what most frequently happens in academia is that the former is confused with the latter, as though, for example, the history of the university were the same as its ultimate meaning, or, turning our attention to the chapter that considers most arguments one after the other, as though the history of teaching Catholicism were the same as the educational objective of its transmission. That Ibáñez-Martín makes a deliberate effort in each chapter to differentiate between what things are and what happens to them, what remains and what changes, is of a high academic standard in my view.

Another characteristic that is very much present throughout the book and

that the reader will find at the start of every chapter, is that each topic is a battlefield where, with the appropriate elegance, the author starts by describing all of the relevant arguments about the matter under discussion, including the most prevalent and widely held ones, wherever they might come from, for example, from the writings of others, from the ephemeral but highly influential opinions of social networks at a given time, or from the description of an event and the important lessons that can be drawn from it. Having done this – again allowing us to appreciate his intellectual honesty, this time represented by rigour – Ibáñez-Martín, as though setting out a chess board, positions the most widely accepted arguments, regardless of whether they are a pawn or a king, and starts using his own intellectual arsenal to try to ensure that we all win the struggle, giving more clarity to the problems presented and bringing us a bit closer to the best and truest argument. However, if we are all to be able to win, there sometimes must be a checkmate, and there is.

Finally, it is worth emphasising the author's constant efforts to accentuate the pedagogical perspective of the problem under discussion. Some might regard this as another foolish epistemological game, but it is not. It has more substance than the classical dispute about the scientific identity of pedagogy. I refer to what professor Ibáñez-Martín suggests is the peculiarity of the pedagogical question; what must educators as educators ask themselves about the situation and what answer must educa-

tors as educators provide. For those of us who see ourselves as pedagogues and wear this badge with pride, despite current times, it is very pleasing to read, among other examples, that «pedagogy is called upon to find rational answers to key issues» (p. 63) or that «pedagogy ... is a practical knowledge in the Aristotelian sense of the word, a prudential knowledge about what is good or bad for the human being as an individual and as a member of society, a knowledge that nowadays has a special difficulty, since the many requirements that currently afflict education – diverse multicultural populations, people of very varied ages, ever more demanding social requirements – turn pedagogical knowledge into an undertaking that is fraught with difficulties» (p. 64) or, finally, that it is worth noting that «these theses are educationally irreproachable» (p. 190).

Moving on to other matters relating to the content, which is what matters most, he does not confuse the potential reader in the prologue. Indeed, from the start Ibáñez-Martín warns us that this book «is not intended for those who regard educational work simply as a way of making a living ... but instead is for those who aspire to a degree of nobility in their profession, leading them to make the most of life and turning them into attractive people for those who are nearby, so that those surrounding them find in them someone who identifies lofty targets for existence and, with their example, they stimulate the desire to excel in order to meet these targets» (p. 12).

Reading the introduction, «Educar para vivir con dignidad» (Educating to

live with dignity), is indispensable, not just for the usual ordered overview of the topics to be covered, but also to gain some essential ideas that make up the basic interpretative framework used in each chapter. For professor Ibáñez-Martín, in contrast with the bien-pensant proclamations of international bodies, principally UNESCO, the basic problem of western education is not a problem of schooling, but «a cultural problem» (p. 11). At various stages in the text he emphasises this idea, for example, when stating that we must «move the educational debate away from the quantitative level» (p. 144) or that «education is never achieved simply through *mechanical* means» (p. 150, author's italics). «The cultural problem of our days is not a shortage of school places, nor that knowledge or skills are not taught. The central question is that in education we have side-lined the analysis of something complex but vital – discussion of the outlines of a *dignified, examined, and accomplished life* – restricting ourselves to encouraging submission to the contemporary mentality» (p. 19, author's italics). Ibáñez-Martín believes that this happens «in two ways». The first involves «rejecting the idea of truth, especially truth about the concept of humanity, to replace it with the idea of authenticity or relativism» (p. 21), and «the second form comprises magnifying the importance for the human being of the social group of origin in which it develops» (p. 22).

The first part of the book is called «El marco básico del quehacer educativo» (The basic framework of the educational activity). It comprises five chapters of in-depth reflection on the objectives of this

activity in which, as the author reminds us, it is necessary to know how to combine the demands of the human condition with the current requirements of globalisation. According to Ibáñez-Martín's argument, this involves recognising new responsibilities concerning the ethical commitment that is now required of teachers in their work and their relationship with the students. This in turn entails going beyond the figure of being a «skilled teacher» to instead become a true «mentor», as «*education is not mere training but is the appropriate outcome of the discovery that the human being is not born in plenitude, but moves continuously towards it thanks to its capacity to commit itself to what it discovers to be true*» (p. 40, author's italics). For students to attain this plenitude, educators must adopt guiding principles for their activity that include promoting a pedagogy of desire (Ch. 4) and excellence in education (Ch. 3). This will require them, firstly, «to make an effort to awaken in their students the desire to *stand up for themselves and help themselves*, without allowing themselves to be influenced by appearances but instead seeking true wisdom» (p. 98, author's italics) and, secondly, to endeavour to achieve the highest possible performance from every pupil, avoiding self-satisfied paralysis that provokes narcissism and overprotection.

Among the many and interesting suggestions made in this first section, I would like to emphasise, regarding the argument we are considering here, the need to reflect seriously «on the characteristics that must guide the exercise of freedom, promoting free development based on free acceptance of the condition

that falls to the individual as a human being, and on the particular features of this condition for each person» (p. 65). Another interesting proposal, in my opinion, is that after analysing a variety of strategies for promoting excellence, all of them very interesting and very well argued, he concludes with the original idea that «full excellence is only achieved when in the school all of its members care for one another» (p. 86).

The second part of the book is entitled «Fanales para la tarea educativa» (Beacons for the educational task), with five chapters covering multiple themes: intellectual education, moral education, religious education, the teaching of Catholicism, the ethics and deontology of teaching, and the possibilities and limitations of the educational agreements. I believe that the common interpretative framework of these chapters is the public exercise of liberty and its impact on personal development when faced with the multiple pressures of the dominant mentality. The reader first encounters an analysis of the interesting case of Emily Brooker and its implications for understanding the profound scope of intellectual liberty. Furthermore, Ibáñez-Martín also warns us of another way liberty is limited, in this case by «Faustian politics». «Faustian politicians» are not content to care for the community by promoting the common good, but instead lose respect for the nature of things and seek to create a *new man* in accordance with their way of understanding the human being, for which end they employ different methods depending on the political system in which they operate» (p. 135, au-

thor's italics). Faced with this situation, the author suggests that we consider that «as educators we are called upon to rally the people against Faustian politicians so that we may all enjoy the freedom to uphold our own ideas in the public sphere, in the same way that we are obliged to eschew indoctrination in the classroom, avoiding the suppression of evidence or teaching something that is not based on relevant arguments, as this is a matter of empowering young people, not reducing their vigour» (p. 137).

Ibáñez-Martín also proposes another area for analysing liberty, emphasising the idea that «any educational action is intrinsically an agreement» (p. 146) and that, therefore, «pluralist democracy also demands a plurality of schools, that are the natural expression of the desires of the diverse groups to which they belong» (p. 145), although the author notes that this must not, from a pedagogical perspective, affect support for the need for these schools to be organised with educational aims independent of the style of each school.

While the first part of the book considered the «ethical turn in educational work», it now turns to a detailed analysis of the role of ethics and deontology in teaching, directly raising the underlying problem: «it is difficult to speak of the importance of the critical sense in education without being in a position to establish an ethical code, apart from the fact that the education of students cannot be limited to memorising what is good and bad, but instead must know the meaning of education for human growth and the best ways of transforming this meaning into the

best pedagogical methodologies» (p. 164). Furthermore, he uses a very well-chosen metaphor, describing teaching «as a cable with four strands in which the red wire (the moral dimension) is very important, but the green wire (the effectiveness of pedagogical initiatives), the blue wire (how opportune its interventions are), and the yellow wire, the depth and brilliance of its choices, are also important» (p. 165).

This second part concludes with a chapter called «Las formas de enseñanza escolar de la religión en una sociedad libre» (Ways of teaching religion in school in a free society), dedicated to analysing basic elements on which there might be agreement for the theoretical and practical development of an agreement on education. It is in this chapter that the reader perhaps finds the most extensive and frequent use of one of the distinctive features of Ibáñez-Martín's thought that we mentioned at the start of this review; he argues and counterargues different positions and propositions to find the best one. The defence of broadening the limits of liberty when faced with the oppression by dominant mentalities that characterises all of this part of the book leads him to suggest, in this case, that «I also do not think it is very sound to argue that the current conflict about teaching a specific religion at school can only be overcome by completely eliminating it from the school. It seems to me that attitudes of greater tolerance, more imagination, and more respect for the Constitution and the identities and liberties of the citizens are required» (p. 186).

The third part of the book is called «Las metas de una universidad educado-

ra» (The targets of an educating university) and comprises four chapters. The first, which is particularly interesting, covers «the study of the deeper characteristics by which any university must define itself, those that can never be absent, however different the aims each university aspires to attain» (p. 195). Ibáñez-Martín is against viewing the university as a «tertiary school» or a «school for professional studies». The main «aspirations» or «essential characteristics» that he identifies in the work of universities are «the search for an environment of liberty and the desire for universal truth» (p. 197).

The next chapter is truly surprising, owing to the specific scope of the practical proposals he analyses when emphasising the different levels of professional competence of university teachers regarding «Training for teaching», «The lecturer's knowledge», «How the lecturer's discourse is presented», «What interest is there in involving the student in the understanding of the discourse», «What attention is given to the characteristics of group teaching», «What special initiatives can be put in place to ensure that the discourse taken on board takes root with the students», «Checking what has been understood by the student», «Evaluation's fitness to its aims», «Ways of driving the evaluation process», and «Measures for giving evaluation an educational effect». The reader will find more similar proposals regarding evaluation of the «Research competence of university teachers». Individuals are free to draw their own conclusions about why a particular way of comprehending theoretical research on education allows someone, in this case, as well as initial

philosophical training, to ignore a certain technically-focused pedagogy.

The third chapter in this section is dedicated to «La específica contribución de la universidad a la paz» (The university's specific contribution to peace). At this point I would like to draw particular attention to the proposal regarding what specific contributions by teaching staff rather than institutions might be. This proposal is based on three main concerns: firstly «promoting social confidence through conversation and coexistence, secondly, encouraging solidarity and friendship between different people, and thirdly, maintaining a university dialogue that aims to find and provide the truth that feeds the soul, a dialogue that is an authentic gift, completely removed from any desire for dominance» (p. 231).

The last chapter in this section is called «La universidad: palabra y pensamiento crítico en la ciudad» (The university: Word and critical thought in the city). In it the author analyses in detail various preconditions for encouraging critical thinking in university students, warning that «the imagination sometimes dazzles us with its attractive form, when what we must address are the lights of intelligence that try to penetrate the depths of the being of our knowledge» (p. 247).

Given its intellectual honesty, to which we have referred on several occasions, this book of a life – an academic life – could not end without the content of its final part, entitled «Los compañeros de un educador» (The companions of an educator). This comprises three chapters, in which he gives thanks for the friendship,

assistance, and example, of very varied types, received from the companion-expert, Professor Millán-Puelles, the companion-friend, Professor Eisner, and the companion-disciple, Professor Esteve.

Before finishing, I would like to draw attention to some ideas that professor Ibáñez-Martín mentions when analysing a given topic in its particular chapters that to my mind transcend specific problems and have a much broader perspective, and indeed have some impact on me as a reader owing to their breadth or general impact since there are, in reality, a *way* of looking at education. Consequently, the statement that «I am not obsessed with the idea of change, but I do believe that it is important to change whatever is necessary to respond to the challenges of the present» (p. 152) seems very significant to me. Likewise, but in much greater depth, it is necessary to emphasise the significant caveat that «if education must develop the humanity of the student, the teacher must have a reasonable and reasoned position on the meaning of human dignity and on the meaning of human existence, as well as a knowledge of the pedagogical actions that have proven to be most effective, taking those ideas as basic guidelines in their work and as criteria for its evaluation. These ideas will, therefore, be the ones that guide all educational decisions, ranging from how to structure the educational system and shape the curriculum to how to evaluate, and the decision to accept or reject home schooling» (p. 164).

Professor Ibáñez-Martín's book is a reflective, well-documented, and well-argued text on important topics that might be of interest to educators nowa-

days. It is a brave text, one that does not conform with most of the positions of the current dominant mentality regarding education in the shaping of human beings. The reader will recognise the origin of some texts and also, in some cases, interesting updates to them. But, above all, when reading them as a whole and in the suggested order, one becomes aware of the difference between a book prepared throughout an academic life and writings driven by the urgency of the moment, fashions, or the curriculum. And this is a robust, solid, and compelling text, one that is to be studied, not just read. It is clearly ready to become a classic in the training of educators. For the postmodernists of theory-literature who want something more than ideas, I would say that it is very well written, it has a dazzling culture, numerous accounts, comments on news items, stories, and literary and cinematic references, all pervaded by an elegant sense of humour. Indeed, we hope that in future editions the author will reveal whether he sold Campbell's book to Amazon and for how much

Fernando Gil Cantero ■

Pring, R. (2016).

Una filosofía de la educación políticamente incómoda (edición a cargo de María G. Amilburu) [A politically uncomfortable philosophy of education (edited by María G. Amilburu)]. Madrid: Narcea. 158 pp.

«Remember Chicago!» This is a warning that those of us who work in university teaching and research in the field of

education should repeat over and over again. The Department of Education at the University of Chicago, founded in 1895 by John Dewey, disappeared despite its early prestige. This department chose to pursue scientific and theoretical excellence in research. Turning its back on the connection with teaching, it ignored the training of teachers and the learning that university researchers can and should derive from the practical contexts of teaching at other levels (primary and secondary schools). In platonic terms, the members of the department in Chicago chose to take refuge on the Isles of the Blessed, dedicating themselves to the contemplation of pure forms without taking risks or trying to descend to the cave of everyday educational practice. Consequently, they lost credibility in scientific terms, in proportion with the discredit that they earned among professionals and politicians, circumstances that led to the department's closure.

In this magnificent book which combines several previously published pieces by Richard Pring, the author gives warning signs such as this one while offering a framework for reflection to understand more deeply the phenomenon of education at present. In short, he sketches an overview in which the role of the philosophy of education is more justified than ever, this awkward discipline that rebels against the currently dominant empire of quantification, measurement, and the language of educational evaluation.

It is true that, following the British tradition, Pring identifies *education* with *formal education*, dedicated above all to

teaching of knowledge. But this task, intended to satisfy a fully human demand, is inconceivable without moral learning. The vision of education the author offers explores the field opened by J. Dewey and R. S. Peters among others, even stating that an educated person might not shine at an academic level and might not show high levels of performance in the ever-more abundant external tests, or will perhaps not have high marks in the centre's internal exams. Nonetheless, this person will have a sense of the direction to take in life, and will be able to reflect broadly and critically on what he or she values in it, from a humane and humanising position.

This is precisely one of the missions of the philosophy of education: to ask repeatedly what it means to be an *educated person*, and schools, universities, educational centres, the community in general, and experts must collaborate in the answers. Practitioners of philosophy of education must motivate these reflections, they must collect and synthesise the most valuable answers, delving into them in greater depth from a more general and abstract plane and based on previous theorising. But they cannot arrogate the exclusive right to offer solutions, isolated from praxis.

Likewise, on the part of the educators involved (in this case teachers) involved, it would be most inadvisable to become mere dispensers of a curriculum imposed from on high or from outside, or to turn into no more than examiners or, even worse, official exam preparers with the aim of scoring highly in the rankings. In contrast, as Pring states,

the teacher should be a *thinker* and *creator* of the curriculum, not just its *deliverer*. And it is in this rethinking that the value of the *philosophy of education* is located, which, as we said above, must not be the exclusive task of professional philosophers.

While reading this text and after reading it, one feels like one is taking the pulse of the current state of affairs in education, discovering basic problems such as neglect for reflection about the aims of education when faced with a mercantilist view of human beings, a new discourse that revolves around eye-catching concepts like *success*, *management*, *external tests*, *performance*, *rankings*, *competence*, *evaluation*, *quality indices*, etc. In light of this, Pring asks: is this education? How is it possible to call this education? Where are the integral growth of the person, the citizen's contribution to the common good, understanding the real need for ethical transformation, the relevance of participation for making democracy an authentic way of life, or the educational celebration of diversity to rewrite, between everyone, a common space of coexistence?

Answering questions like these is undoubtedly vital in our time, as even though the official documents of governments and ministries of education say that the objective is to provide an education for all, in reality, as Pring observes, «it has not been possible to avoid a reductionist view of education that only guarantees *success* to a small number of students: those who perform well in the framework of a narrow concept of education, limited to the *academic framework*» (p. 65).

In this compilation, painstakingly edited by María G. Amilburu, the reader encounters stimulating arguments to develop this broad idea of education, guided by one of the most prestigious philosophers of education, in whose reflections thinkers of the stature of Dewey, Peters, Oakeshott, Hargreaves, Kohlberg, Noddings, McIntyre, Ayer, and Ryle, among others also appear.

The revision of the figure of John Dewey is especially interesting. In an article with the more than eloquent title: «Saviour of American education of worse than Hitler?» Pring, leaning more towards the former position, tries to deconstruct the accusations that, since R. M. Hutchins, have affected the legacy of Dewey and his proposal for human development in democratic communities. As Pring notes, «in England and Wales, as in the United States, we are witnessing a revolution in educational language, aims, and provision, characterised by disdain for personal experience and the professional tradition; by the transfer of responsibility for education from the public to the private sector, specifically to profit-making companies; by an emphasis on competitiveness at the expense of cooperation, the deprofessionalisation of teachers and an equivalence between what is worth learning and what is measurable and quantifiable» (p. 82). Educators and educational academics and thinkers who question the benefits of such a revolution, which has expanded beyond the borders of the USA and Britain, might find a good basis in the pedagogical thought of Dewey who might not have been education's great saviour, but undoubtedly casts

light on the shadows of the current educational panorama.

As well as the article mentioned above, this book contains an unquestionably well-chosen series of Pring's writings, forming a coherent whole around questions such as the meaning of *education* and *educated person*, the relationship between school and community (regarding Dewey's common school), the need to expand the mercantilist notion of the human being and education, the importance and limits of evidence in educational research, the virtues relating to such research, and the essential role of universities in training teachers. It should be noted that these institutions must, of course, maintain the critical tradition that characterises them but not at the cost of avoiding praxis and immersion in real educational settings. Remember Chicago!

Vicent Gozálviz ■

Grupo SI(e)TE. Educación (2016).

Repensar las ideas dominantes en la Educación [Rethinking dominant ideas in education].

Santiago de Compostela: Andavira. 189 pp.

Many assumptions and foundations in the field of education are seen as absolute truths that are generally accepted and are not questioned. Grupo SI(e)TE performs the task of re-examining some of these dominant ideas in our society, approaching them from a perspective of reflection and commitment to educational work.

This book is preceded by a dedication to José Luis Castillejo Brull, the cofounder of the Group who died in December 2016.

The book covers twelve topics, each of which focusses on one of the dominant ideas in education. It groups them into three sections that revolve around the thematic axes of politics, school, and society.

The first part comprises chapters one to four and focusses on analysing dominant ideas in education from a political perspective. The questions covered are the transmission of values in education, the compulsory status of education, equality, and democracy in schools.

The first chapter of this work suggests going beyond the transmission of values, as its interest is not in «offering a pedagogy of the transmission of values, with precise techniques and strategies, but asking ourselves how to make possible a transmission based on the values that must be transmitted so that they can be recreated and lived by citizens and *take root* in them» (Pérez Alonso-Geta, p. 24).

In the second chapter, García Garrido disentangles the question of compulsory schooling. After a historical overview of the matter and faced with the reactions it causes at present, the author comes out «in favour of making it flexible, adapting it to varying circumstances, opening it up to different formal educational pathways and a range of types of educational centres and programmes» (p. 37) in response to the interests of students and the wishes of their families. He also argues for public authorities to promote *integrated education policies*.

«Equality has become a political keyword, a social demand and the basis of

the democratic forms of the state.» With these words Rodríguez Neira (p. 41) starts chapter three. After analysing the contradictions and conflicts deriving from this social demand, the author focusses on the repercussions that the paradigm of the antiauthoritarian school has had on education, and concludes by noting that without authority there is no education, as there is no education without teachers taking responsibility for the present and the future of their students (p. 51).

Chapter four poses the question of whether the school should be democratic. This issue is examined by Sarrañana who states that «the link between school and democracy is no less complex than the general relationship between society and democracy» (p. 64). The democratic ethos in the educational sphere requires a series of conditions: the existence of a clear set of regulations known by all, being the result of a participatory process, that it can be reviewed, scrutiny of the hidden curriculum as a source of democratic distortion, and the presence of a personal commitment to the group and the institution.

The second part of the book comprises chapters five to eight and covers some dominant ideas in education from the perspective of the prevailing social assumptions in educational work: the ideal of excellence, education inside and outside the school, knowledge and know-how, and the language of education.

Rodríguez Neira analyses excellence as an educational ideal in chapter five, starting from the position that it is a so-

cial and political good, as well as an individual reality. «Excellence is the only resource that can provide us with the pride of being and the only property capable of giving meaning to our daily work» (p. 75). He sees this as an obligation rather than a personal goal that education must facilitate.

In chapter six, Colom Cañellas guides us through the topic of «diverse educational universes», education inside and outside the school. The author suggests that we should «consider educational phenomena as a whole and understand them and approach them from a single viewpoint» and argues for a complementary approach required by the existence of a formal type of education and an informal one, analysed under the umbrella of a unifying theory of education.

Vázquez Gómez uses a question for the title of chapter seven: «¿Saber igual a saber hacer?» (Is knowledge the same as know-how?). Here he states that «the focus on know-how, which provides the foundations for competence-based education, is of little use for understanding and resolving complex problems» (p. 100). Human competence is not limited to know-how and involves the «potential for optimising transference», in the author's own words.

Chapter eight concludes this second part. In it, Touriñán considers the topic of language in education. With his normal mastery, he exposes the reality that «in the educational setting, a language empty of content, or with a contrary or even contradictory meaning is sometimes used, developed, and fabricated»

(p. 107). He argues for the value of generating concepts pertaining to pedagogy as well as avoiding «opinionitis» the dictatorship of opinion) and the traps that the slogans and metaphors used in education set for us. The solution to this problem requires creating a way of thinking that enables us to account for the «educational» character of the educational activity, because: «1) it meets the criteria for use of the term, 2) through its activities it fulfils the aim of educating, and 3) it fits the real meaning of this action, in other words, it is in accordance with the character traits and meaning that pertain to it» (pp. 123-124).

The third part of the work analyses some of the dominant ideas in education from the educational perspective (chapters nine to twelve). The central topics are the relationship between school organisation and didactic methodology, the innovative role of technology, the meaning of educational resources, and the adaptive relationships of education to the students in the educational institution itself.

In chapter nine, Colom considers the relationship between school organisation and didactic methods. He indicates that «the mismatch between school organisation and didactic methodology is a constant that continues over time in the most varied ideological contributions» (p. 139), and argues for a new concept of school organisation that is flexible and permeable to the teaching staff's needs regarding methodology and innovation.

In chapter ten, Touriñán states that «every educational action needs resources to be implemented. And the first nec-

essary resource is the one that allows us to progress from knowledge to action» (p. 147). The central topic of this chapter is resources as structural elements of the educational intervention in which the choice of a resource implies support for a specific technology. But we must bear in mind that they must always conform to the activity and meaning of education. Starting from the complexity of the type of resource, he emphasises the distinction between internal and external resources, the former relating to competences, capacities, internal activities (thinking, feeling, wanting, choosing-doing, etc.), and the latter with communal activities that are external to the agent (play, work, study, etc.) and instrumental activities (reading, drawing, dance, calculus, etc.). The importance of resources does not prevent the author from stating that «education is not a problem of resources and more resources,» as this would be to confuse their pedagogical value (p. 162).

In chapter eleven, Vázquez Gómez clears up the myth of educational innovation understood as technological innovation. The title itself poses the question «Is educational innovation a matter of technological innovation?» (p. 163), and the piece argues that «this is one of the most dominant pedagogical myths at present». For the author, of course, educational innovation «easily outweighs this technological reductionism», given that «any educational innovation always starts with the introduction of a new idea, whether about the foundations, the processes, or the aims of education» (p. 165).

Chapter twelve closes the third part of this work. In it, Sarramona attempts to

answer whether education should adapt to the needs of the student. His argument is that «the school must provide the setting where these needs can be developed ... promoting habits of cooperation, dedication, collaboration ... through shared learning, performing group tasks, and taking part in activities that respond to social needs» (p. 179).

Grupo SI(e)TE, the members of which are the authors of this book, has reconsidered education, deconstructing dominant ideas and myths. As readers, we take away the enjoyment of this work which, with its guidance, will undoubtedly help us reflect on our own educational formulas. Its pedagogical interest is beyond doubt and it is compulsory reading for anyone wishing for a better understanding of the educational problems it covers.

Maria Julia Diz López ■

Marina, J. A. (2016).

Despertad al diplodocus. Una conspiración educativa para transformar la escuela y todo lo demás [Wake the diplodocus: An educational conspiracy to transform the school and everything else].

Barcelona: Ariel. 219 pp.

Can we improve the Spanish educational system in a short time period? This is the question José Antonio Marina tries to answer in this book, where he compares the Spanish education system with a great sleeping diplodocus that must be woken. Doing this requires doing something that is only possible if

we all work together, every citizen of this country, not just those of us who work in education.

It is a call to action, educational mobilisation, uniting to move in the same direction in a turbulent period when learning is more important than ever. The book contains 219 pages of arguments for improving education in our country, for undertaking an educational change over a five-year period that is perfectly justified in the first chapter. A change that envisages «expert in learning» as the profession of the future as part of the appearance of a new science «of cultural evolution and pedagogical progress», which will act as a guide to society's learning and will make it aware that it must continue to learn. Educational mobilisation has already begun; there are ever more initiatives that transform educational reality, and guided by educational professionals, it is in our hands to take advantage of this opportunity, to propose a shared and debated process of reflection and implement its actions at all levels, as if we do not, others to whom this task does not correspond will take charge of it.

Throughout its pages, there is a large collection of «lived experience boxes» full of innovative educational experiences, based on scientific evidence, that are already being carried out in schools over the world.

While Marina defines himself as an «educational megalomaniac» who recognises his inability to make his dream reality, he knows that the only way of producing a phenomenon is by increasing the probabilities of it occurring. Therefore, he

dedicates chapters three to seven to each of the agents of the change that he considers to be key.

Chapter one considers the complexity of implementing an educational change and the question of who should manage it. Two important concepts are used: on the one hand, the fact that a system comprises distinct elements and that each of them has an influence on the whole, and, on the other hand, that before anything else, three elements are needed for a change to occur: believing it is necessary, wanting to do it, and knowing how to do it. Therefore, before offering solutions, Marina tries to stimulate forces to drive these solutions.

However, motivation is no use if there are not clear targets to aim for. Therefore, Marina proposes five objectives that might make a coherent, realistic, and inspiring guide for those who want to join in with the change: reducing the school drop-out rate to 10% compared with the current 21.9%, climbing by 35 points in the PISA scale, thus putting us on a par with countries like Finland, increasing the number of excellent students, and reducing the distance between the best and the worst, facilitating a situation where all students can attain their maximum personal development regardless of their economic situation, and finally encouraging the acquisition of twenty-first century skills, such as emotional intelligence.

Chapter two proposes a model of intelligence for pedagogical change that emanates not from amateurs but from experts in the subject. In Spain's recent

history, there have been attempts to transform education using laws of dubious rigour and with minimal agreement that are of little use for the twenty-first century. In light of this problem, the above-mentioned science of cultural evolution should appear, showing its capacity for the school to reach its economic, cultural, social, and personal objectives, taking advantage of all scientific discoveries and integrating them into our culture. However, far from providing directions, what will most define this science is its ability to teach its citizens to manage their intelligence and capacities so that they can learn and solve problems all through their life.

From the third chapter onwards, the agents of change start to be discussed; the first of these is the school. The training future teachers receive will depend on the value we place on education, and the teachers we have will largely depend on the success of the educational system. In Spain, teaching is not an elite profession, like medicine or engineering, and our objective should be for it to become one like in the countries with the world's best educational systems. Consequently, the relationship between the school and the university is inescapable.

Each management team must act as a true team, intelligently and pulling in the same direction. Every single one of their members must feel that they form part of a team that has been formed for a purpose that is bigger than them as individuals: facilitating the integrated development of new generations. They must definitively become organisations that learn, and

must be true allies for the students who also have something to say in the transformation of the centres. We cannot make changes that silence their true protagonists.

Chapter four adds another ally: the family, «the second prime engine of change». School and home must be united, sharing a pedagogy that favours their co-operation and mutually helping each other. Marina sees the family as a micro-system within the macro-system in which the child develops physically, emotionally, linguistically, and cognitively, and so without the involvement of the family, what is done at school will probably fail. If we claim that improving teacher training is a prerequisite for educational success, perhaps we should do the same with the other agents, and, if this is not possible, the school should offset shortcomings in the family.

Teachers, parents, and students live in a certain setting, somewhere that has an influence on every one of them, and precisely because of that is part of the educational system. These are cities, the third engine of change, the implications of which are discussed in chapter five. The city, according to Marina, is a fine example of shared team intelligence and its success is because it supports the happiness of its inhabitants. If cities contribute to the intellectual, emotional, cultural, and economic well-being of their citizens, it is not possible to separate the objectives of the school from those of the city, both being jointly responsible for change and for mobilising all citizens to meet these objectives.

Chapter six is dedicated to the world of business, the fourth engine for change as organisations that learn can extrapolate their capacity to promote and invest in talent, be results-oriented, define their vision, mission, and culture, and work in a team, things that can be unfamiliar to those who run the educational system. Furthermore, if schools are the place for children and businesses are places for adults, the transition from one to the other will be less of a shock.

The seventh and final chapter refers to the last link in the system and engine of change: the state. A good knowledge of which functions correspond to the central state and which to the regional governments in the running of Spain's educational system would solve most of the legislative failures that have marked recent years. A state agreement on education could involve the agreement we have been awaiting for so long, although good management of the new measures by the agents mentioned above is still necessary. The state must promote education, finance it, manage it, and achieve a real learning society. The opinion of experts in these measures and an increase in funding until it represents 5% of GDP, would be two key elements that would contribute to the quality of the educational system.

The book concludes by noting that substantial changes are produced by the synergy of small changes that, while not very visible on the large scale, proliferate increasingly in Spanish classrooms. One teacher can change a class but many can transform the system. This work is a brilliant proposal for doing

this with our system (so long as we work together).

Aída Valero ■

Esteban, F. and Román, B. (2016).

¿Quo vadis, Universidad?

[*Quo vadis, University?*]

Barcelona: Editorial UOC, 258 pp.

From the signing of the *Magna Charta Universitatum* (1988) to the present day, there have been vertiginous changes in the praxis and conception of the university. These changes have continuously been accompanied by works that take a critical position towards them and by works that do nothing but support a model we might agree to define as technical-didactic that has become one of the hegemonic ways of organising universities. This book by Francisco Esteban and Begoña Román proposes other changes that follow what could perhaps be called a third way, one that offers new pathways and recovers other concepts of the university from memory. These are other pathways to continue thinking in depth the project of a university that for those of us who work or study there runs through and traps us.

It is a matter of thinking and presenting this institution in a broad way connected with the overall idea of what it means «to be part of a university» and of what is based on the very idea of the university (from its inception to the present day). This is the sense that Karl Jaspers gave it in *The idea of the university*, a recently republished work

where he suggests that «the university is a community of scholars and students engaged in the task of seeking truth.» A simple and succinct definition (that would surely be questioned by many members of the university community) which is at the heart of the book we are reviewing here.

This book was originally presented as the doctoral thesis of one of the authors (Francisco Esteban) at the faculty of philosophy of the University of Barcelona, and was supervised by the other author (Begoña Román). It is a mature work (it was Esteban's second doctoral thesis; his first was in pedagogy) that connects and fits perfectly with a broad group of authors and works that over time have meticulously approached the study of the university. The most important of these include Manuel García Morente (*El ideal universitario y otros ensayos* [The university ideal and other essays]), José Ortega y Gasset (*La misión de la Universidad* [The mission of the university]), John Henry Newman (*Discourses on the scope and nature of university education*), Étienne Gilson (*El amor a la sabiduría* [The love of wisdom]), and the multi-author work *La educación personalizada en la Universidad* [Personalised education at university]. Most of these books have been republished recently and share the interest Esteban and Román show in the aims and the hidden *ethos* of the university project. This interest has been accompanied by experiments that with radical clarity call for a liberal education project in the university and that are expressed through the use of great books in the core curriculum (examples such as those

of Thomas Aquinas College in the USA or the University of Navarra in Spain). All of this makes *Quo vadis, University?* a necessary question, for the future, for resistance, for orientation and guidance in bureaucratic situations and in other cases.

This book contains four large chapters that will be considered below. Chapter one tackles the question of memory and the university and acts as a fixing point to show that there has been something continuous in this institution from the Middle Ages to the present day. As the authors state, «The thing that gives its identity to what we understand as the university is not just the word itself. A university, per se, is no more than a corporation of people. However, what makes this corporation a university and not something else, is the fact that this corporation specifically comprises experts and students, people who embody and bring life to a particular activity geared towards a special purpose: intellectual development» (p. 23).

The second chapter focusses on the «Philosophy of university education», something that is not always present in works that take the university as their subject. Using communitarianism as a working framework, the authors examine contemporary university education. Consequently, they subdivide the chapter into two sections to tackle the intended question in greater detail: a) preliminary considerations on the idea of the university; and b) thinkers who have tackled the topic of the idea of the university in their research (Humboldt, Newman, and Ortega y Gasset). In the authors' words, «the

three philosophies of university education display two shared characteristics. The first is that they were established drawing on the genesis and evolution of the first universities of the Middle Ages. The second is their transcendence, as they are still present in the reality of European universities» (p. 131).

The third chapter considers questions relating to communitarian critique and university ethical education. After setting out questions about the idea, aim, and mission of the university in the previous chapter, this section focusses on the communitarian critique. To do this, it reviews questions linked with the identity of the individual and its educational possibilities in the university. Consequently, the authors suggest that «university education is interpellated by the area outlined here. In it, experts and students come together who, as well as playing their corresponding roles, have and display a certain ethical nature» (p. 163). That said, the ethic offers certain resources that are used for serving the ideal of the university.

The last chapter is a good, well-structured, forward-looking pedagogy. This chapter does not easily yield when facing ways of comprehending the university (especially in its most utilitarian and mercantilist extreme). For the authors, «utility has taken the reins of university education» (p. 209). The fact that the student (in the proposal made by the authors of this book) comes to be recognised as an ethical learning subject gives another distinct perspective. Beyond instruction in the form of competences, headings, portfolios, and certifications, there is the idea

of education (*Bildung*) that endeavours to restrict «productive planning» and «profitable programming».

Ultimately, this book is an interesting read for continuing to think about the university and for continuing to exercise the original mandate for which it was created: bringing together experts

and students. This union must continue to permit those who inhabit it to move between the deep possibilities of the *paideia*, the *humanitas*, and the *Bildung* in pursuit of a complete liberal education that allows them to develop as rounded individuals.

Jordi Planella ■