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**LATVIJAS  
UNIVERSITĀTE**



**80<sup>th</sup> International Scientific  
Conference of the  
University of Latvia 2022**



***Can educational historiography play a role in promoting quality, technology and humanity in education?***

***Marc Depaepe***

Plenary session in Riga (online): *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education*, February 3, 2022



# PROGRAMME of the seminar and CONTENT of my slides

- Introduction
- From “old” to “new” tendencies
- A short history of the history of education
- Persistent discussions about “relevance”
- The illusion about “objectivity” and universal truth
- Resulting in endless discussions
- Can a cultural historically conceived h. of ed. be “pedagogically” relevant?
- The concept “grammar of schooling”
- Embedded within a broader “grammar of educationalization”?
- Both grammars illustrated
- Possibilities for pedagogical relevance
- Blaming teachers: another example (USA)
- The discourse of teacher blame
- Feminization processes
- Relevant for policy-makers?
- And what about technology?
- Cf. technology in Corona-times
- Education is more than knowledge acquisition
- What kind of *Bildung* on the basis of h. of ed.?
- Valid expectations, colored by the rhetoric of the centenary of the University of Latvia
- In conclusion: *it's all about interpretation*”



80<sup>th</sup> International Scientific  
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Plenary Session. Human, Technologies  
and Quality of Education

February 3 2022, 10:00 AM

Online

Zoom link: <https://lu-lv.zoom.us/j/99940564453>

## Programme

9:45 – 10:00	Joining the conference	
Chairs: Linda Daniela, Zanda Rubene		
10:00 - 10:10	<b>Anita Muižniece</b> <i>Minister of Education and Science of Latvia</i>	Opening words
10:10 - 10:20	<b>Linda Daniela</b> <i>University of Latvia, Latvia</i>	Opening words
10:20 - 10:50	<b>Valeria Cavioni</b> <i>University of Milano- Bicocca, Italy</i>	The PROMEHS project: a universal multi-component curriculum to promote mental health in schools
10:50 - 11:20	<b>Dirk Ifenthaler</b> <i>University of Latvia, Latvia; University of Mannheim, Germany</i>	Context-based and Adaptive Indicators for Effective Learning Support in Online Learning Environments
11:20 - 11:50	<b>Marc Depaepe</b> <i>University of Latvia, Latvia; University of Leuven, Belgium</i>	Can educational historiography play a role in promoting quality, technology and humanity in education?
11:50 - 12:20	<b>Heidi Hyytinen</b> <i>University of Helsinki, Finland</i>	How can we enhance the generic skills of undergraduate students?
12:20- 12:30	Conclusions, discussions	



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# Introduction

- Playing with words from the title of the seminar...
- in a different (in fact reverse) order ► Why?
- Pragmatically: to let it fit with the new project in which I am involved in Riga (ZD 2010/AZ22): *Integrating cultural object-based learning into university studies: the case of the history of education*
- Of course, a more fundamental reason: as I am convinced (after almost 50 years of doing research and teaching in this field) that H. of Ed. can enhance without any problem the quality of education, and hopefully – albeit indirectly – also can contribute to more “humanity” in our society.
- Maybe technology can play a role in both processes, but technology is not to be seen as an educational objective by itself; rather as a possible means to facilitate quality & humanity...
- The problem, however, is that history of education from the outset, has been explicitly put in relation to (these and other) pedagogical aims and therefore was seen more as an educational than as a historical discipline



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# From “old” to “new” tendencies?



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# A short history of the H. of Ed.

- Origins of the discipline date from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> C
- Cf. France ► historical circumstances: nation state formation ► importance of (primary) schools and teachers as “agents” of socialization...
- H. of Ed. occupied an import place in this endeavor; was central in the curriculum of newly founded teacher training (an historical perspective was essential to legitimate the role of education and educators in the society – cf. philosophy, importance of the “heritage” of pedagogical ideas, but also experiences from successful “school histories” ► acts & facts)
- H. of Ed. (often seen as “historical pedagogy”) followed that track till the 1960s; several “paradigm” shifts in the research (slowly but surely from ideas to intellectual and mentality history... interaction with the educational practice in its relation to the society ► social history; among others, influence of “great theories”, cultural history; more critical theoretical awareness but no consensus, only surficial developments... (cf., e.g., social empiricism vs. Marxism)
- Discussion remained! about, e.g., “pedagogical” relevance of the “history”, certainly in the “teaching” institutions...



# Persistent discussions about “relevance”

- Internationally spoken, this led often to “marginalization” if not “abolition” of the H. of Ed. in the educational curricula (also because competing “new” research methods – experiment, surveys, interviews, evidence-based approaches, quantification, use of sophisticated [dazzling] statistics, ICT etc., – became popular)
- Nevertheless, research was “growing”, also from historical interests in other “social” (or cultural) sciences; e.g., heritage education, role of museums, keeping & valorizing historical artefacts for future generations... (danger of “educationalizing” the past, in stead of “historicizing” it...) ► cf. museums of education
- Brings us back to the pedagogical/educational “uses” of history ► history of history of education shows a lot of “misuses” and “abuses” of the past; cf. e.g., Marxism-Leninism, but also the evolution in the U.S.A.: revisionism ► radical revisionism ► post revisionism? When history is used to underpin ideology, theory, political & societal viewpoints, it ceases to be history, at least in my opinion, but not so simple; discussion continues, and will continue for ever and ever...

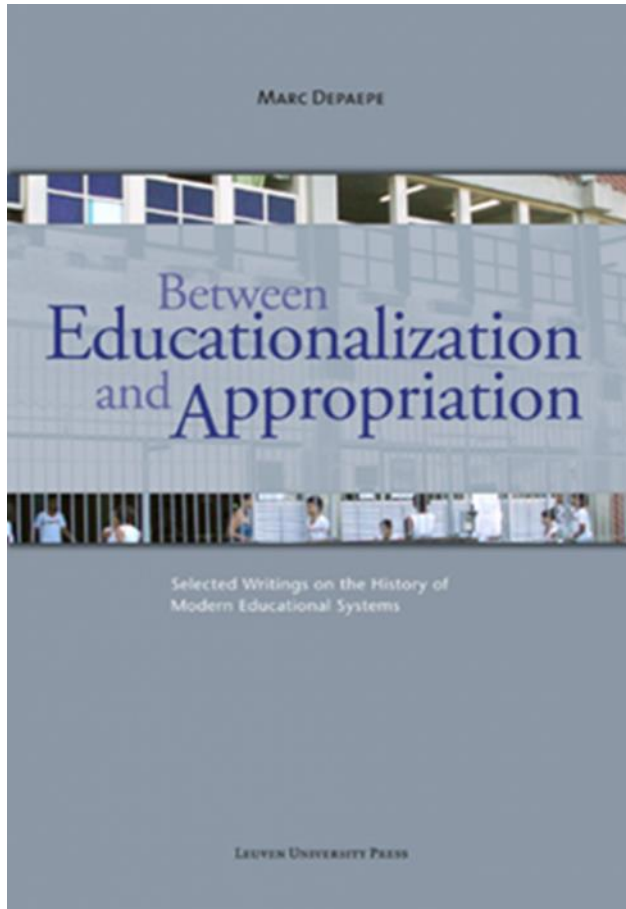


# The illusion of “objectivity” and “universal truth”

- Our point of view does not imply a return to old-fashioned claims of objectivity and universal truth (à la Leopold von Ranke). As we are, among other things, aware of the paradox of presentism: history is always written from the present and the act of historiography – the writing of history of education (which I like to call educational historiography, see further) always bears traces of it (i.e., the specificity of the context of space and time in which it is made, the interests of the researcher(s), etc.)
- But this does not at all provide the author(s) a license in order to write the history as they wish, or as their audience and backers may like it... Historiography consists of hard labour, critically studying different kinds of sources – as many as possible – in relation to the existing studies; it is a craft which requires intellectual honesty...
- What we have operationalized as being willing to take on as many changing perspectives as possible, which can lead to demystification and demythologizing of former points of view; in this sense history might be a “discourse” over “discourses” (Foucault, but this does not make from us “Foucaultians” nor adepts of writing “history of the present”, cf. our discussion with Th. Popkewitz)



Resulting in endless methodological discussions...



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# Can a cultural historically conceived H. of Ed. be “pedagogically relevant”?

- Although H. of Ed. (conceived as educational historiography) must not be regarded as a subdiscipline of “educational” studies or pedagogy (which was often the case in the “old days”) it can nevertheless still be “pedagogically” relevant, albeit in a less explicit (and moralizing) way.
- Historical knowledge might provide, e.g., better insight into processes of “educational innovation”
- In general, educationalists tend to have rather simplistic and naive (technological?) conceptions about such processes: top-down, mechanical, and so on...
- History, however, can show how different kinds of “innovation” have taken place in the past (successfully or not...), and demonstrate how complex the processes of “implementation” really are: resistance does not only come from the so-called conservatism of the teachers, but also from the fundamental characteristics of classroom management, and persistent social stereotypes about schools, education, teachers, and so on...



# The concept “grammar of schooling”

- At Stanford University (Larry Cuban & co.), the concept of an existing “grammar of schooling” rooted in the past was developed: a set of unwritten rules of how the classroom and school management should be; which are not based on scientific research, nor on any pedagogical theory, but which are based on daily experience (the school routine that became, in a sense, an “empirical wisdom” passed down through generations of teachers)
- All kinds of “new” education (reform pedagogy, new schools, alternative teaching methods, etc.) had difficulties in creating a “child”-centered approach; it mostly failed, and/or was appropriated to the ideas of an “old” school... the model engraved in collective “memory”; it was, to quote Cuban, “reforming again, and again...”
- By studying the Belgian case [*Order in Progress*] we have tried to add to this didactic “grammar” (related to the instruction of knowledge via an explicit curriculum) a pedagogical one (related to the pedagogy of learning “good” behavior): the grammar of educationalization
- Some of its aspects have been taken over in the U.S.A. (David Labaree, at Stanford University...)



Embedded within a broader “grammar of educationalization”?

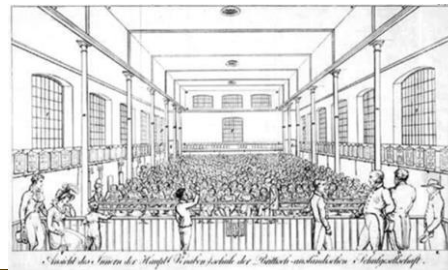


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# Both grammars illustrated:

## Ordo ab chao?



### The Black Box of Schooling

A Cultural History of the Classroom

P.L.E. Peter Lang



De educatieve actie



Adriaen Van Ostaede (1610-1685) 'De Schoolmeester', 1662, Parijs, Louvre  
De lagere school in België van de Middeleeuwen tot nu (Brussel: ASLK, 1986), p. 209

M. DEPAEPE  
in cooperation with  
K. Dams  
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B. Eggenmont  
H. Lulzuwers  
F. Simon  
R. Vandenberghie  
J. Verhoeven

**ORDER IN PROGRESS**  
Everyday Educational Practice in Primary Schools - Belgium, 1880-1970

Studia Paedagogica 29

Leuven University Press  
2010



# Possibilities for pedagogical relevance

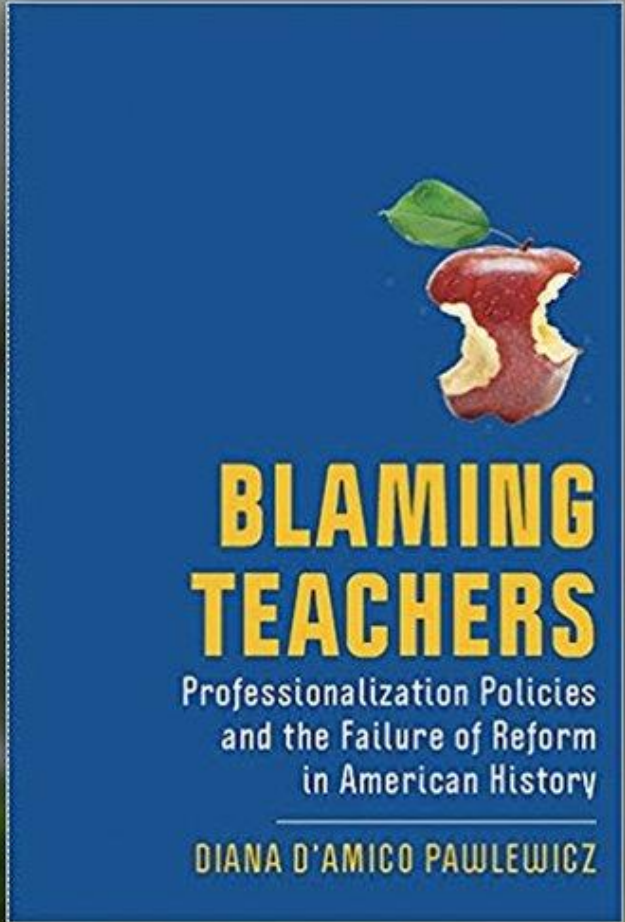
- To my mind the case of the existing “grammar(s)” of schooling and educationalization is illuminating in several ways:
- 1) the outcome that most pedagogical “innovations” are in the long run nothing more than appropriations and adaptations of the ideas of the “new” (school) into the “old” model of schooling relativizes and nuances the strong dichotomy between the two: in between the “old” and “new” school there are a lot of mixed forms which dominate the educational landscape...
- 2) this historical knowledge also refers to actual discussions on the fundamental orientation and aims of the school as a place of “knowledge acquisition” (curriculum centered) or as a place of “well being” (child-centered) and puts this discussion into perspective...
- 3) perhaps it is also liberating for the teachers to know that they are not necessarily responsible for the failed reforms, but that structural processes also play a role... since “blaming the teachers” seems to have been a strategy that went hand in hand with the professionalization policies of education reform in the U.S.A.; see the recent publication of Diana D'Amico Pawlewicz...



# Blaming teachers: another example (U.S.A.)



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AND  
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# Another example: discourse of teacher blame

- Pawlewicz (2021): “*the discourse of teacher blame powered the historic policy stories that produced education reform, locally and nationally*” ► which is a discourse formulated by, among others, policymakers, teacher educators [including those who wanted to make the teacher education curriculum more relevant and purge it of educational history!], union leaders, and social commentators...
- In which I find a lot of analogies (but also differences, e.g., the racialization of school reform) with the Belgian situation... as well as with the actual situation and discussion about teacher shortage, the social position of the teacher, the revaluation of the teaching profession, etc.
- Cf. our study *Geen trede meer om op te staan* (1993!) [No more classroom-step to stand on] analyzing the interaction and complexity of social factors (and possibly quantifiable vectors) playing a role in the so-called “devaluation” of the social position of the teaching profession (such as income, length and level of training, trade union protection of, but also self-control over the profession, to name a few); here, I will only deal with one factor: the degree of feminization because it also plays a determining role in the American study



# Feminization processes

- Despite the evolution of female “emancipation” continuity of gender-stereotypical labor division in “western” world... [contrast with the “Soviet” approach of the time?] ► differences between “hard” and “soft” (caretaking) sector...; the old idea of the man as the “head” of the family and the “bread winner”...
- Attractiveness? Once too much women, men do not want to be identified with this profession? Started as a “men’s” job... see the empirical data... (the economic crisis of the 1930s.... ); Awareness of policy makers afterwards?
- Some graphs

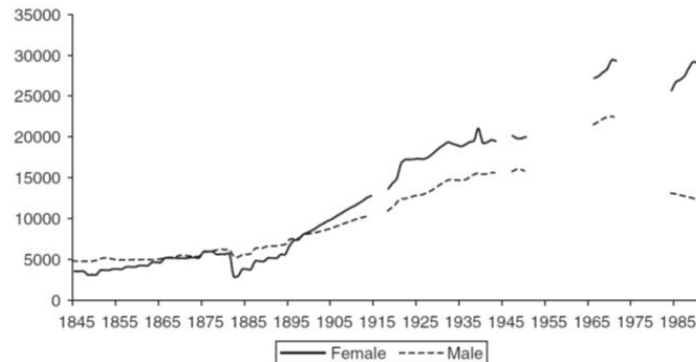
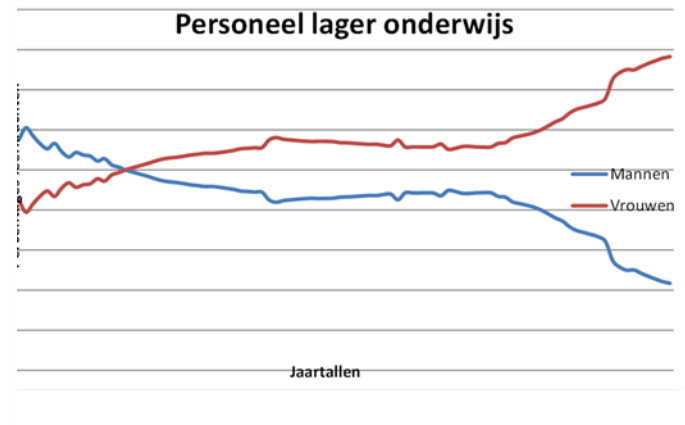


Figure 6.2 Number of teachers in primary school education by sex (1845–1992)



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# Relevant for policy makers?

- To be sure: H. of. Ed. is no recipe book (cf. political history/ medical history)
  - ▶ the “lessons” (it looks like pedagogues launched an eternal quest for lessons) of the past are to be situated – if they exist – at another level than pure “content”; history is not an “applied” science from which solutions can be derived for actual problems: the context is too different...
- But that does not prevent that there are some persistent patterns in the "text" of pedagogical action, which can be recognized in different spatial and temporal constellations; and can provide us with some “insights” into the structure of these patterns.
- My experience, however, is frustrating: policy makers ▶ cf. debates in the think tank for educational policy [at so-called “Bremberg” Forum] from the 1990s to 2010s, where I have asked several “ministers” of education, how to handle these feminization (one of the elements of teacher shortage nowadays) were disappointing...



# And what about technology?

- Cf. some of the historical studies of technological innovations done by our students (Karl Catteeuw, e.g., PhD on “wall charts”; but also different “master’s theses” – with very different quality )
- Most of these technological innovations were introduced and propagated by policy makers, interest groups, enthusiastic innovators, inspectors, pedagogues, educationalists, teachers, and so on: light images, transparencies, slides, film, radio, school television, language lab, computer, power point presentations, etc.
- Followed mostly the same pattern of development: before acceptance resistance by teachers, fear for losing the control over teaching, and little by little appropriation within the framework of usual school and classroom practices, resulting in a minimal use of these so-called innovations...
- As far as they can be included in the grammars of education discussed above: this means insofar as they are compatible with the historically rooted conceptions of (a traditionally, i.e., “schoolish” conceived) "school".



# Cf. technology in Corona-times

► promoting the laptop as a tool for on-line education ► with a nod to René Magritte's famous painting "*la trahison des images*" [*the betrayal of images*], better known as "*ceci n'est pas une pipe*"; hence "**this is not a school....**"



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# Education is more than knowledge acquisition...

- The actual efforts to promote “online” education clash with the collective idea of a school with the teacher who has, as a central figure, the educational practice under control ► cf. Comenius ► teachers is the sun illuminating with his knowledge and morality the pupils in the classroom
- Cf. the Corona situation... promotion...of "ICT" ► "online“ education – certainly not the realization of what Illich saw as “de-schooling” the society; generally, the efforts of online education end in dissatisfaction (as they do not fit with idea, mission of school ► social development: no instruction without education/formation ► “Bildung”
- **But what kind of Bildung do we need?** Beyond the scope of history (which shows and explains what “has been” in the past, without presenting itself as a normative science of the present or future... ).
- Nevertheless, effects of historical consciousness easily can result in “wisdom”, “tolerance”... and that is why we should continue to teach history and history of education (the human being is not only an “animal educandum” [Langeveld], but also an historical conscious being, which accumulates experiences from the past and keeps memories of them...



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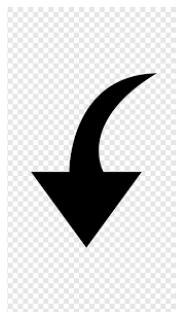
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# What kind of “*Bildung*” on the basis of h. of ed.?

- Cf. my speech “*Universitas non Moritur*” ► a plea for the promotion for “critical thinking” through research and teaching in educational historiography at the Centenary of the University of Latvia
- But we can never be sure about the educational results and its effects – aiming at, is nothing more than hoping for, and believing in education



***Universitas Non Moritur!***  
***The promotion of critical thinking through historical consciousness and research in the cultural history of education***



**Marc Depaepe**



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# Valid expectations, colored by some rethoric of the “momentum” of the centenary of *U.L.*....

The argument that counts in our neo-liberal society is, however, one of often one-dimensional economic profitability and utility. This makes the position of cultural historical research, and also education itself, particularly difficult. Investing in it does not yield immediately visible results, certainly not in the terms of practical advantage. Still, the historical approach and way of thinking seem far from superfluous for our society. It makes itself into a possible dam against the terror of the immediately useful. Historical research, also in the historiography of education, transcends the shortsightedness of our own time by making it clear that the prevailing drive for utility is only an element of the long-term process of modernization. Without historical consciousness critical distance toward the present is not possible. It is in this sense that I believe that universities and their humanistic spirit will not die. And I am sure that the University of Latvia, given its survival of the occupation by two dictatorial regimes, can play a central role in this: *Universitas Latviensis non morietur!* [The university of Latvia will not die!] Long live the Latvijas Universitāte!!!



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# To conclude: “*it’s all about interpretation*”

- History investigates where and when certain ideas, mentalities, practices became dominant and why; it is therefore more than mere description, but also explanation through interpretation...
- An interpretation that is co-determined by our points of view (which are part of our biological condition, cf. the metaphor of an eye, already evocated by Nietzsche...)
- So, our own interpretation needs to be constantly questioned: in how far does my opinion, my situation, my preference, my world view, etc. intervene in my research and teaching (of H. of Ed.)
- This kind of meta-reflexivity seems to me an ethical duty; critical thinking (one of most important goals of history teaching!) must be part of the deontological code of the historian of education...
- We may not talk down to the public (our audience, listeners, readers, etc.) and/or financiers; but we are supposed to defend our findings with rational arguments and to listen actively to alternative explanations, and, if necessary, dare to change our mind and have the courage to do so...

