The essays in this collection address the relation between education and politics in new ways. Rather than understanding education simply as the object of political decision-making, or as preparation for politics, the authors of this volume see education as implicated in social conflicts and in the political processes that produce and change social structures. Education, then, is a practice that reconfigures the relations between subjectivities and the political. The collection focuses on several critical cases and theoretical debates where the relation between education and politics demands new articulations. It explores the potential of theoretical languages proposed by Rancière, Laclau, Derrida, Mouffe, Bakhtin, and other thinkers whose work has not yet been fully recognized in its pedagogical meaning.
Education and the Political
Education and the Political

New Theoretical Articulations

Edited by
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Tomasz Szkudlarek
INTRODUCTION: EDUCATION AND THE POLITICAL

Even though there has been a constant interest in political issues within the community of educational scholars and researchers, the connection between educational and political theories seems still to be underestimated. There is, of course, a powerful intellectual tradition of thinking about education and politics together, starting with Plato and continuing through such giants as Rousseau and Dewey, to contemporary times. This tradition is diversified, but a common feature of many significant texts written so far is that education is thought as part of large-scale political projects, often utopian, of construing “better” (rational, republican, democratic, and so on) societies. Today the situation is both similar (education is, to a large extent, a part of the neoliberal political agenda) and different, in this respect that the present “utopia”, as compared to the previous ones, seems to be devoid of ethical justifications. Both education and neoliberal politics have been apparently reduced to accomplices to the hegemony of economic rationality. Education is positioned as serving the global economy, especially, as we hear, the economy of knowledge. On a national scale, and in the political dimension, this means that education supports the peculiar “politics of depoliticization”. Many of the traditional responsibilities of states and many of their social functions have been redefined as personal problems and responsibilities. As such, they are capable of being imparted and are defined as a matter of learning. Learning has become the solution to nearly anything. Joblessness, inadequate retirement provisions, environmental pollution, or poor health services are no longer seen “simply” in terms of public arrangements, but as problems demanding individual awareness, knowledge, proper attitudes, skills of rational choice, and self-management. To us as educators, it may sound nice and smell like money; but it inflates the responsibilities of education far beyond their conceivable limits and, in fact, turns pedagogy into a regime of dispersed power, to a form of governmentality (in Foucault’s terms, 1991) exercised in ever-changing, short-term, project-based “emergency” campaigns. Probably public education has always been involved in the execution of power. In terms of Foucault’s theoretical work, its institutionalization, in the form of compulsory schooling, contributed to, and, in a way, masked the proliferation of discipline and the strategic merger of knowledge and power as political regimes, disguising them in pedagogical and pastoral attire (Szkudlarek 2003). The present form of this connection is different, then, mostly in terms of scale, atomization, and privatization. What critics of this wave of the “educationalization of social problems” (Depaepe and Smyers, 2008; Peters, 2008;
Simons and Masschelein 2008) point to, as well, is that social problems redefined as learning deficits are simultaneously excluded from more responsible political agendas. For instance, defining unemployment in terms of personal employability, and therefore as a lack of “proper” education adequate to current trends in the job market, masks the fact that it is a structural phenomenon the alleviation of which requires changes in the operation of global economy.

The imposition of economic rationality on education is parallel to a reduction of politics to the role of serving the same rationality. Political decisions, in spite of the aura of power that shines through their spectacles, follow the logic of capital: they build infrastructure and create secure conditions for the flow of transnational financial assets. Like education, politics gives up its autonomy. Economy has become the ultimate sovereign power.

Even though this picture seems to invite Marxist descriptions of the current scene, Marxism is not unproblematic. With Marxism, we remain within an idealized model of reality determined by economy and cannot move towards a more complex understanding of the educational/political scene (see, for instance, Laclau’s critique of the reductionism of Marxist theory, Laclau 2005). But the search for “the theory” of the present that would offer a more multilayered picture stumbles over numerous obstacles, as if the Thatcherist slogan “there is no alternative” were really internalized and made us unlearn the ability to think in terms of possibilities. On the other hand, the present time is also a time of questioning that lack of alternatives. We are witnessing a large wave of protest and revolutionary unrest, strongly concentrated in the Mediterranean region. However, referring to the movement of indignation as an example, we may see that those movements are predominantly negative: they organize themselves to say “no” to the status quo, and have more difficulty in articulating their “yes” to new political agendas. As it is often the younger generation that portrays itself as betrayed by neoliberal promises, political protest becomes educational as well. This is a movement of de-identification, of challenging the neoliberal hegemony, and reclaiming “the political” of politics and “the educational” of education (see the papers by Biesta and Masschelein and Simons in this volume), even though there is no clarity as to what form they should take.

We should refer here to Chantal Mouffe (2005) and to her insistence on “the return of the political” that demands an acknowledgment of heterogeneity and conflict as inextricable features of the society and that brings back the instance of decision. Mouffe refers here to Carl Schmitt, but counter to Schmitt and his critique of liberal democracy, she calls for inventing “agonistic” forms of politics, where enemies become adversaries in the democratic process. We can see nowadays that the political is back. However, it rarely takes the agonistic form postulated by Mouffe. We can also see a movement to reclaim “the educational” of education; this is especially vivid in the wave of protest against subordinating education to budgetary constraints. We urgently need to renew the debate over what education is about, apart from serving people to capital, apart from its functions of socialization to the present and qualification to the market (Biesta 2010, 2010a). In these simultaneous movements,
both education and politics try to re-invent themselves, and the first gesture here is
that of de-identification from their contemporary roles: of defining what they are not
about. Those movements should be analyzed together, we should attempt to find a
common theoretical logic in them. Deprived of critical understanding and operating
independently, they may produce effects that are difficult to accept. The return of the
political in the form of “decisionism”, as a kind of voluntarism à la Schmitt rather
than in Mouffe’s way, may lead to authoritarianism and – through the assertion
of conflict and the inevitability of the friend/enemy distinction – to violence. The
retreat from the market in education may close schools and universities for those
who have gained (or simply bought) access to their provisions, and may seal the
division between quality education for the few and mass education that gives simple
qualifications to the many. The move away from the neoliberal society does not
necessarily have to produce a better one just because widespread protests and civic
resistance are justified. As was the case in the first decades of the twentieth century,
and as may repeatedly be the case nowadays in many regions of the world, we
may democratically establish undemocratic political regimes, and pedagogically
construct massive educational exclusions. We need constant awareness of the
directions in which those changes proceed, and a very strong notion of democracy to
guide them. But that notion, again, needs to be reinvented: the highly ritualized form
that democracy takes nowadays, one that reduces citizenship to occasional voting, is
in the crisis of legitimacy itself.

This rapidly sketched scene of conflicts and challenges forms a background
against which we can position the interests of scholars brought together in the
SCAPE network. These interests are theoretical, and rarely do we address current
political issues directly; instead, we aim to test theoretical languages, in terms of
their explanatory power and possible consequences that could redefine education in
a closer relation to the issues of democratic politics. SCAPE stands for Studies in
Culture, Conflict and the Political in Education, and the network was established
We met next in Vancouver, Canada, in 2009, and then in Gdański, Poland, in 2011.
This volume is composed of papers whose drafts were presented during the Gdański
symposium. The way we identified ourselves can be captured by the following
quotation from the SCAPE web page (http://www.scape-research.net/Home.html):

The members of SCAPE share an interest in conceptions of democratic
politics as involving disagreements and struggles over the power relations in
society and attendant ethico-political values. They are concerned that the more
deliberative approaches see conflict only as counter-productive to democratic
dialogue, and even as indicative of communicative breakdown. Instead, the
participants believe that some kinds of conflict are not only inevitable but, in
fact, valuable for and constitutive of democracy itself.

It is this recognition of disagreement and conflict as inevitable in democratic
politics that is behind the questions and problems re-appearing in our discussions.
We are concerned not only with tensions and power structures being obliterated by a deliberative consensual understanding of politics, but also with problems and difficulties that the conflictual perspective brings to the fore. To say the least, this is a challenging perspective.

Our thinking about education in close relation to conflictual traits in political philosophy is, obviously, related to the crisis of neoliberal ideology. The way the neoliberal hegemony reconfigured the domains of education and politics obviously demands criticism. But that criticism itself often resorts to instances of “oneness”, of a totalized unity – be it in rational, ethical or mythical forms – and some of them clearly endanger the project of democracy (the papers by Mendel and Säfsström in this volume help to understand why such oneness can be problematic). Our efforts are, therefore, informed by the search of such theoretical languages that could give the ideas of democracy and democratic education an invigorating impulse. This is not an easy task, the social scene is extremely complex and multifaceted, and recent economic, political, and cultural changes have restructured most of the structures (including even the notion of “structure” itself) that used to provide grounds for our understanding of reality. This is certainly a time when theoretical investigations are needed not only for the sake of pure cognitive interests, but for the very practical reasons of describing and understanding the world we live in.

If what we experience is indeed a new configuration of the global space that has not yet revealed its logic, one of the more intriguing things to interrogate is whether that emerging logic allows room for “traditionally progressive” questions of equality, democracy, dialogue, human rights, and emancipation. What is behind this kind of question is the question of normativity, still unresolved since the postmodern and postcolonial debate (see the texts by Kodelja, Ruitenberg, and Szkudlarek in this volume). Not only are we not sure how human rights or emancipation can be achieved by political and educational means; we do not even know if and for whom those notions have any appeal in normative terms, and – for that matter – what normativity is nowadays in itself.

The question of normativity is linked here to that of agency, and they are both serious questions. They are still more important in the light of our previous observation that recent decades have immensely re-configured the social world. Its grammars, geographies, and architectures are nowadays different, for instance, because of the blurring of the very notion of the public sphere, through widespread policies of privatization (see Mazawi’s paper in this volume). Who is in charge of what here? Are there any identifiable subjects in “network states”? We speak here of such classic notions of the humanities and social sciences as subjects, structures, agencies, and ethical responsibility.

Thinking of the social as heterogeneous (à la Mouffe and Laclau) means that “by itself” it cannot be totalized. If societies are structured, then, it is an outcome of hegemony, according to Laclau, an outcome attainable only by rhetoric means. Social structure is equal to discourse. The reference to rhetoric opens the possibility of linking contemporary political theory to the humanistic tradition and of describing
the political in the language of literary theory — for instance, as Koczanowicz proposes in his contribution to this volume, with a focus on Bakhtin’s understanding of dialogue. This category not only seems to resolve, through references to hermeneutics and understanding, some problems with normativity that the theory of hegemony encounters, but it is well-rooted in educational theory as well.

Those exemplary questions mark some of the territory covered by the analyses provided in this volume. Its most extensive part, however, interrogates and develops concepts proposed in the political philosophy of Jacques Rancière. This inspiration is taken up and developed by Biesta, Masschelein and Simons, Ruitenberg, Mendel, and Säfström. Rancière’s philosophy certainly offers one of the languages that promise new ways of understanding old social problems and that capture phenomena so far difficult to see.

The growing importance of Rancière’s philosophy in educational studies stems from several traits in his work. First, it is a strong voice in debates on the possibilities of equality in education. What Rancière suggests is that we should ignore inequalities (by implying radical intellectual equality of the subjects of our educational endeavors) rather than trying to prevent their reproduction. Second, Rancière’s work helps us understand power relations in a more subtle way, pointing to the role of aesthetics (as regimes of the sensible) as the field of policing and of subversive politics. Third, in Rancière’s language we can make an important distinction between identity and subjectivity, through which we can envisage the possibilities of autonomy (subjectification) amid the forces that work towards “molding” us into existing social structures (identification). And there are more reasons why this rich philosophy has inspired several important contributions to this volume. It gives fresh and provocative meaning to old political and pedagogical concepts, and — as a serious theory should — provokes questions and collisions with other, often equally powerful theories (see, for instance, Ruitenberg’s paper confronting Rancière and Derrida). There are several such collisions reported on and analyzed in this volume, and not only referring to Rancière’s thought. In spite of those discussions, this collection does speak, in different voices, on one central issue: it tries to redefine the relation between education and politics, or — more precisely — between the educational and the political, in a way that keeps the democratic project alive.

Before we move to the introduction to particular texts in this volume, let me note that many concepts used so far (like de-identification, hegemony, the political, the educational, etc.) are borrowed from thinkers who keep inspiring our investigations, like Rancière, Mouffe, and Laclau — and, primarily, from the terminologies of the essays included in this volume. The readers will find explanations, contextualizations, and critical analysis of key terms in those texts themselves.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTIONS

The papers presented in this special issue are intertwined in numerous ways, and their dialogue is dense and difficult to summarize. The questions addressed in the preceding
part of this introduction are not taken up directly in the form presented above, but all
the papers are diversely situated within this problematic. As I have said before, many
of these questions have been addressed in the language proposed by Rancière, whose
work has inspired heated debates on democracy, arts, and education. Such papers are
presented in the second part of the volume. We start with papers by Zdenko Kodelja,
who addresses the classic, fundamental issues of justice and the right to education,
Leszek Koczanowicz, whose paper refers to Bakhtin’s concept of dialogue, André
Mazawi, who speaks of the complexities of the social world that result from the blurring
of private/public distinctions, and Tomasz Szkudlarek, who takes up the question of
normativity in Ernesto Laclau’s theory, in which complexity, or heterogeneity, gains
an ontological status. We move, therefore, from classic, through dialogic, to complex
and heterogeneous notions of agency. The second group of papers shares a strong
Rancièrean reference. They are those written by Gert Biesta, Claudia Ruitenberg, Jan
Masschelein and Maarten Simons, Maria Mendel, and Carl Anders Säfström. Let us
look more closely at the main theses of the papers in this volume.

Zdenko Kodelja asks the question: Are Duties of Justice in Education Global in
Scope? The question connects to the urgent issues of global justice, responsibility,
cosmopolitanism, and to attempts at re-defining the idea of the world order. After
having argued that it is possible to infer moral judgments from factual statements,
and having presented the global scale of educational deprivation, Kodelja says:
yes, there is a moral duty to provide justice in the access to education globally.
Kodelja’s text does not play with language in a way that could help us invent new
metaphors to understand global issues. Instead, with analytical rigor, it moves from
one explanatory option to another, presenting an array of possible ways to expand
our ethical claims to the assumption of a global responsibility. The focus is on
education, but the whole argument also pertains to other political issues. Kodelja’s
voice reminds us that politics could be rational, and that we should create rational
knowledge and arguments that are relevant to global challenges. The question raised
in the concluding part of the paper – the one of who should, or could be responsible
for the implementation of the right to education – evokes one of the most fundamental
contemporary debates, the one of agency in an over-determined, or supercomplex,
reality. In other words, the claims to rights and their provisions, as proposed in this
paper, are confronted, in the following texts, with the complexities and heterogeneity
of contemporary policies. This confrontation calls for a need to translate the classic
notions of democratic values into political and pedagogical languages that address
those complexities not as mere deviations from theoretically manageable rationality,
but as ontological challenges that may be transformed into pedagogical action. That
will require a quest for the place of normativity in those new languages.

Leszek Koczanowicz’s paper, entitled Education for Resistance, Education for
Consensus? Non-consensual Democracy and Education is, in fact, a discussion
about the relation between consensual vs. conflictual (agonistic) forms of thinking
about democracy. Referring to Chantal Mouffe’s conception of antagonism and her
postulates of agonistic democracy, Koczanowicz proposes that we make use of
Bakhtin’s dialogical perspective which, as he says, can resolve the tension between those two traditions, and help us alleviate some controversies he finds in Mouffe’s position. Counter to the term’s *prima facie* connotations, dialogue is not merely “dialogical” here; it is not restricted to dual (subject-to-subject) exchanges. It seems, rather, to be only a minimal analytical structure that helps one to understand the manifold polyphonies of social interactions. A special role is played in this analysis by Bakhtin’s notion of the superaddressee (a potential subject who “understands” the dialogic interchange and thus becomes “the third” agent involved in it) which, according to the author, can replace Laclau’s and Mouffe’s notion of hegemony, becoming at the same time “a constitutive outside” for what they describe as antagonistic social relations. In short, this translation of Mouffe’s theory into Bakhtinian terms is intended to re-introduce a notion of understanding as the condition of democratic antagonism. It seems that we have here the first potential answer to the question of normativity: it can be grounded in understanding, if we allow for such a concept in contemporary theory. Taking into consideration that Bakhtin’s work has already found numerous applications in educational theory, Koczanowicz’s proposal may also help to connect educational thinking to the theories of radical democracy.

The complexities of the social and the political – in Koczanowicz’s paper expressed in terms of Bakhtin’s theory and aimed at supplementing theories of hegemony – find further and powerful elaboration in André Mazawī’s paper called *Political Grammars of Privatization in Education*. Mazawī’s text refers primarily to educational policies in the USA, Great Britain and British Columbia, Canada, but his analysis is relevant to any part of the globe where policies similar to New Public Management have found home. Mazawī’s claim is that policies of privatization, as the most common feature of current changes in education, mean more than mere shifts in ownership of education. They create complex and multifaceted structures of governance that have to be understood not only in terms of the shifts in educational opportunities, but also as the indices of larger re-configurations of the relations between the state (nowadays a network state) and political communities, first of all, in terms of their territorialisations and agencies:

> The territorialized force of privatized schooling markets can be … understood in relation to reconstruction of both a state with graduated forms of sovereignty, and graduated forms of membership to political community. At this juncture, new geographies of schooling are emerging … [that] not only contain or constrain political aspirations of certain groups, while enhancing those of others; they also recast the political community and the state into a complex and multifaceted regime of graduated and fragmented modes of operation (p. 55).

Such an approach makes the claims to rationality and dialogue expressed by Kodelja and Koczanowicz more problematic, and – perhaps – still more worth considering. How, within the frameworks of “networked” ontologies, do we cater for justice in education? How can we delineate responsibilities and how do we address political demands? Second, how do we maintain a dialogical approach in a situation in which
the very borders of the subject are porous and – especially when we think of social and political agents – almost impossible to define? To put it succinctly: what languages do we have at our disposal to deal with old (and valid) questions of rights, justice, responsibility, and consensuality, in a new situation of complexity that collapses our binary logics and replaces claims to sovereign agency with the notion of graduated agencies? How can such agencies be called to responsibility for politically important decisions? Education becomes here a pivotal social experience that illustrates how complex and how “unmanageable” the social world is becoming nowadays.

The following paper, *Identity and Normativity: Politics and Education* by Tomasz Szkudlarek, also deals with theories of hegemony proposed by Laclau and Mouffe, and further attempts to resolve some controversies that they appear to evoke. Laclau’s theory of identity is built as an ontological one, which means that it purposefully avoids the “ontic” content of particular historical demands and particularities of the subjects construed around those demands. This is the source of Laclau’s success, but, at the same time, it provokes the question of a “normative deficit”, as Simon Critchley (2004) has put it. To answer this question, Laclau speaks of the normative (connected to the ontic) and the ethical (connected to the ontological) as instances that help us think of normative criteria in identity construction. Using Chantal Mouffe’s *Democratic Paradox* (2005) as another instance of thinking of normativity within the theory of hegemony, Szkudlarek proposes that we need to expand Laclau’s distinction between the normative and the ethical towards a triadic structure that distinguishes, within the normative, between two instances which Szkudlarek calls the deontic and the deontological, respectively. As he argues, such a triadic structure is implicitly present in Mouffe’s text already. The sense of this attempt is to create a richer framework in which we can judge political and educational strategies of identity construction in terms of their normative consequences.

The second group of papers is connected with a Rancièrean perspective.

Gert Biesta, in his paper entitled *Time Out? Can Education Do and Be Done without Time?*, addresses the issue of temporality as linked to (deprivation of) freedom. The paper follows, and gives more substance to, the idea first presented in an “educational manifesto” by Biesta and Säfström (2011). Opposing both educational populism aimed at mere adaptation to what is, and idealism which is usually understood as what is not (yet), Biesta argues that what is “the educational in education” – freedom – resides in the tension between “what is” and “what is not”, but the latter should not be understood in temporal terms, (as “the not yet”), because what matters in education would then be forever deferred. Where temporality is relevant in education is in its functions of qualification and socialization; where temporality is problematic is in relation to subjectification – a function that is more specifically educational (and, thus, not reducible to sociological or psychological dimensions). Biesta follows here the thought of Rancière (e.g. Rancière 1991), who identifies the dominant way of thinking of inequality in temporal terms, as retardation, and his understanding of politics as “staging the contradiction between the logic of police order and the logic of equality” that has to be “assumed” and
“verified” (in the meaning of “making true”) in our action (p. 82). As the foundation of equality is, in Rancière’s thinking, the fact that we are all speaking subjects, Biesta builds his central argument on the issue of freedom of speech (this feature will be taken up in Säfström’s text as well). The child is a speaking subject, and the way this assumption is enacted is most of all through being addressed by the child. "My ability to speak is there when someone is addressed by my speech. And this, so we could say, is not a temporal issue at all” (p. 86). The assumption that “the child is speaking” (whatever “noises” he or she makes) and its verification in the recognition of being addressed by the situation, form “an educational act by which we are bringing into a relationship the ‘what is’ of the child and ‘what is not’ of speech, the ‘what is not’ of subjectivity” (p. 86).

Claudia Ruitenberg’s contribution is entitled The Double Subjectification Function of Education: Reconsidering Hospitality and Democracy. Her point of departure is the controversy (expressed by Rancière) between Rancière’s notion of democracy and Derrida’s notion of hospitality. As Ruitenberg notices, a number of authors in educational theory refer to Derrida and Rancière simultaneously; therefore this controversy needs careful scrutiny. Ruitenberg’s answer is built up with references to Biesta and his insistence that education is concerned with subjectification, and “for subjectification both hospitality and democracy are relevant concepts” (p. 91). She notes that democracy (as a possibility of claiming space) and hospitality (as giving space to the other), or – in other words – the political and ethical perspectives of subjectification – do not have to be contradictory; moreover, both those perspectives are crucial as each other’s “watchdogs” in education. She observes that Derrida’s notion of hospitality is addressed to those who are in position to be hosts to the others (they are not, to say the least, homeless for instance), while Rancière is concerned with those who have to claim their place in the social, as the police order makes them invisible. As Ruitenberg says, however,

The question is not which of these projects we should try to tackle – helping the included open up the spaces they inhabit, or helping the excluded claim the space – but how we can tackle both. … When it comes to the subjectification function of education, then, “subjectification” in the Rancièrean sense of creating a space where political subjectivity can emerge, and “subjectification” in the Levinasian/Derridean sense of creating a space where singular subjectivity can emerge, need not be incompatible aims. … They may well serve as each other’s corrective or watchdog. Hospitality calls attention to the risk that the formation of a collective political subject … can result in new exclusions and inhospitalities …, democracy calls attention to the risk that an openness to the singular Other can leave the host blind to structural and contingent arrangements that unevenly distribute the positions from which hospitality is offered or sought (pp. 101–103).

The next paper in the volume – Jan Masschelein’s and Maarten Simon’s The Politics of the University: Movements of (de-)Identification and the Invention of Public Pedagogic Forms – proposes a “counter-history” of the university which, as the
authors say, is not an institution, but “the name for the association [of scholars and students] where public thinking takes place”. In a temporal sense, it operates in “a time of suspension” (scholé) and involves numerous layers of de-identification (“we are no disciples, no pupils, no apprentices, ... no clergymen, ... but students and scholars”, p. 107). Therefore the university is a dangerous place, constantly tamed and “crystallized” in ways that suppress its “experimental movements and inventions” by the sacred forces of Philosophy, Faculty, Science, Excellence, etc., that create the “victorious” history of the university. The counter-history of the university “as a movement” outlined in this text involves, instead, what is specific to the university – particular public pedagogic forms (the public lecture and the seminar) that are linked to the movements of de-identification (we are not...) and profanation (in the sense of setting things “free for the common people”). The authors lead us through a series of such profanations: of the book, which gave birth to the public lecture; of reason, the profanation of which means – according to Kant – “the freedom to make public use of one’s reason in all matters”; of culture and time, which is the source of the postmodern university; up to the recent profanation of production and communication that gives rise to the “entrepreneurial” university. This last profanation gathers the subjects who are “all” producers – of their own selves – that invest in their learning to sell themselves on the market. This “crystallization” is subject to de-identification in contemporary educational protest movements. With a move of profanation of thinking and communication, taking place simultaneously with the growing role of screen-text culture’s replacing book-text culture, and creating a “democracy of thought and communication” that seems not to need those who “teach how to think, to speak, to communicate” (p. 116), there comes the challenge to invent new public pedagogic forms that could, again, gather “students and professors that are interested in something, and that thing becomes an issue that gathers a thinking public” (p. 117).

The paper by Maria Mendel (Towards the Ignorant Gdańsk Citizen: Place-Based Collective Identity, Knowledge to Refuse, and the Refusal to Know) explores another field of identification, de-identification, and subjectification. Her text is based on empirical research on how the local community of the city of Gdańsk remembers and forgets a spectacular event from the post-war history of the city, when eleven Nazi concentration camp personnel, accused of persecuting the inmates of that camp, were hanged before the eyes of some 200,000 onlookers. The execution itself is interpreted here as a ritual enforced by the authorities, whose rationale was to erase the German past of the city and integrate its new, mostly immigrant population around a spectacular symbol of passage into a new, post-war world. However, the event has been almost entirely forgotten, which makes Mendel ponder over the role of non-memory, which she links to ignorance in Rancière’s and Biesta’s terms, in identification and subjectification. The fact that such a spectacular event has been erased from the collective memory speaks of a complex of guilt and the refusal to accept the enforced identification with post-war reality, when the whole country was violently re-shaped in territorial and political terms. It suggests that the enforced rite of passage “did not work” and that it might have produced subversive effects of de-identification, which
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gave room for unpredicted forms of subjectification, based on place and space rather than on the temporal dimension. In theoretical terms, the conceptions of identification, subjectification, and ignorance (refusal to know) are, thus, supplemented by an instance of the knowledge to refuse, a competence to ignore the given.

Carl Anders Säfström’s paper *Stop Making Sense! And Hear the Wrong People Speak* is another interesting attempt at drawing educational conclusions from Jacques Rancière’s work. What is the object of contestation in this article is a national curriculum (in its exemplary Swedish form) that is aimed at creating “the One” of collective identity. So constructed, the One seems to perform two functions: it creates a fictional and depoliticized moral subject (“we are good”; the evil – as Säfström illustrates by Swedish language coursebooks written for immigrants – comes from the outside), and it obliterates internal divisions, for example, the inequality between rich and poor. Following Rancière, we can educate people in equality only when we assume that they are equal. However, the whole police order of the nation-state implies otherwise and masks inequalities with national oneness. Therefore those who assume equality as the point of departure in education “speak nonsense”; they situate themselves not only beyond the police order, but also beyond rationality. In Rancière, it is language, its poetic functions, and the fact that we all are “speaking subjects” capable of bringing new elements to the social, that make us equal as subjects. Hence Säfström’s claim expressed in the title of the paper: stop making sense (do not follow the known, the sensible, as it has been made visible), hear others (“the wrong” ones, those who have something different to say) speak (this is not meaningless noise, this is speech). Such disruptions in the fabric of schooling let democracy – as a clash between the “police” order that structures the aesthetic rules of visibility and invisibility, and the practices that make assumptions of equality true – happen in schools.

What is learning if not to make intelligible what was before unintelligible? That is, in order to learn something which is not already perceived as something understandable within a given scheme of things, one has to embrace a fundamental distrust of that scheme and be prepared to see something one has not seen before. … The art in teaching, its poetry, is to hear “the wrong people speak”. And when that happens in the social context of a classroom, that classroom can indeed become a community of poets (pp. 140–141).

DO WE HAVE A THEORY?

The papers presented in this volume are diverse in their ways of dealing with the relation between politics and education. The languages applied here, from the analytical through theories of dialogue, heterogeneity, hegemony, and the network state, to that of politics as the clash between the police order of what there is with the radical assumption of equality that “is not”, but demands “verification”, offer a broad theoretical spectrum in which we can trace the “adventures” of identity,
subjectivity, agency, and normativity; of exclusion and possibility; of democracy, the educational, and the political in temporal and in spatial perspectives. Those “adventures” sometimes mean that the language applied in the whole volume, as stemming from diverse theoretical sources, cannot be adequately unified. We do not, therefore, have a (singular) theory, at least not in terms of conceptual uniformity. However, this deficit may be seen as an important position in itself. I think that this is precisely one of the features of our network’s debates: no meaning is fixed, conflicts are not only played between clearly defined agents, but are intrinsic to the very nature of the political and the educational – to the very relations that precede any constitution of agency as such.

One of the examples of this situation is the notion of identity. In Laclau’s theory (as recounted by Szkudlarek) identity is a desired, yet ultimately impossible, condition of the social. In the texts inspired by Rancière (Biesta, Masschelein and Simons, Mendel, and Säfström), we have references to the notion of identification with connotations that make problematic an understanding of identity in terms of “desire”. Identification is opposed here to subjectification. This tension relates to the fact that Rancière originally understands emancipation as pertaining to individuals (hence they have to “claim space” for their subjectivity, between or against the socially structured police orders that “identify” them in certain ways), rather than to social systems. On the other hand, in Laclau and in Mouffe (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, Laclau, 2005) we have the notion of identity and emancipation as pertaining – in a way that is stronger than in Rancière’s work – to social structures, understood, first of all, as discursive structures. Identity (or totality) in Laclau is an “impossible” (never fully attainable but always striven for) object of desire. This is, in my opinion, a happy semantic discrepancy: it points to the inextricable tension within the structure of identity that, to put it simply, both connects us to the social and sets us against it, both gives us agency and limits it in a “closure” of identification. We can see attempts to speak of both those dimensions simultaneously: for instance, by trying to build a bridge between Rancière and Derrida (in Claudia Ruitenberg’s paper); or by pointing to a sequential movement of enforced identification and ignorance of memory, which leads to a kind of subjectification, in Maria Mendel’s text. Incidentally, the notion of ignorance as an instance of emancipation and subjectification can be seen here as a resourceful way out from the limits of the Foucauldian power/knowledge structure: if we have got accustomed to the idea that power operates through knowledge, it is not surprising that the idea of ignorance has at last begun its emancipatory career.

As I said before, we do not have a theory. The papers collected in this volume present a kind of in-between position that gradually develops in the course of our seminars and publications, and – as we hope – gradually translates itself into a more coherent language, which has a potential of grasping current problems with understanding politics and education in their multifaceted relations and in their multidimensional crises. Rather than being a cause for despair, those complexities and critical tensions should be treated as signs of democratic possibilities and of education that can regain its meaning, going beyond its function of “serving people
to capital”. As seems clear from many topics addressed in this volume, we do not postulate substituting this weakening function with that of preparing people for democracy as something that does not yet exist. Democracy – as we can read in the papers by scholars referring to Rancièrean categories – has to be practiced here and now, by assuming a radical equality that inevitably sets itself in conflict with the existing police orders of “the sensible”. This is the context – called “politics” by Rancière and “the political” by Mouffe and Laclau – in which meaningful education takes place. We hope that the overall message of this collection is clear enough to invite its readers to a further discussion of these issues.

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The main aim of this essay is to give some reasons why duties of social justice – as regards education – are not only duties to compatriots but rather duties to all persons, at least in cases when “a state fails to provide persons in some other country what they are owed” (Moellendorf, 2002, p. 42).

Let me start by mentioning two facts: first, more than a hundred million children are deprived of the most basic education. Most of these children live in poor countries. Second, there are rich countries and many rich people with the sufficient resources and the capacity to reduce the number of those children who are deprived of the most basic education. The question, therefore, is whether governments and well-off people in rich countries ought to help to reduce the deprivation of basic education in poor countries.

At first glance it seems that we cannot reasonably answer this question because, according to Hume, “ought” cannot be derived from “is”, or in other words, “moral conclusions cannot be derived from non-moral premises, values from facts” (Pidgen, 1991, p. 423). Therefore, we can derive neither an affirmative nor a negative answer to the question as to whether the governments and well-off individuals in rich countries ought to help to reduce the deprivation of basic education in poor countries from the aforementioned fact that more than a hundred million children are deprived of the most basic education. However, it seems that this problem can be solved, because the impossibility of deriving “ought” from “is” is a matter of formal logic, that is, “the conclusions of a valid inference are contained within the premises. You do not get out what you have not put in. Hence if ‘ought’ appears in the conclusion of an argument, but not in the premises, the inference is not logically valid” (p. 432). Therefore, if we replace the non-moral premise (a factual preposition which describes how the world is) with a moral one, the answer to whether we ought to help, which is a moral judgment that prescribes how the world should be, is logically possible.

Consequently, the first step that we have to take in order to achieve this answer is to replace the aforementioned statement – that in the contemporary world we live in, more than a hundred million children are deprived of the most basic education – with the statement which expresses a moral judgment on this matter. Such a judgment can be the following: suffering from the deprivation of basic education is something bad. We can argue that it is a bad thing because basic education is, according to Stefano...
Maffettone, one of the basic rights that we can conceive, as Henry Shue does – “as a sort of meta-rights, namely rights without which no other rights or opportunities may be enjoyed” (Maffettone, 2006, pp. 21–23). Persons without any basic education “often do not know what rights they have and what they can do to use and defend them” (Nickel, 2003, online). In addition, without a basic education, their abilities to participate fully and effectively in the economic and political life of their societies are very limited. The same can be said for their abilities, which are, in John Rawls’s opinion, equally, if not even more important, namely the abilities to enjoy the culture of their societies “and to take a part in its affairs, and in this way to provide for each individual a secure sense of his own worth” (Rawls, 1971, p. 101). Because of these and some other reasons, basic education is recognized as an important human right, which is not only a moral right, but also a legal right. As such, it is guaranteed by international documents on human rights which many countries have accepted and ratified. Consequently, they are legally obliged to provide basic education to everyone. However, despite this, this right to basic education is violated in many countries. As a result, more than a hundred million children are, as we have already seen, deprived of the most basic education. And this is bad. I believe that most people would agree with this. Even more, the claim that suffering from the deprivation of basic education is something very bad, is difficult to refute reasonably.

If we accept this claim – and I think that we should do so – then it is possible to take the second step toward answering the question of whether we ought to help to reduce the deprivation of basic education in poor countries.

What we need to do now is to substitute the first of two premises of the famous argument put forward by Peter Singer in his article “Famine, Affluence and Morality”, in support of the thesis that the well-off people in rich countries have a moral duty to help poor people in poor countries. The first premise in his persuasive argument is: “Suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad” (Singer, 2008, p. 3).4

After replacing the first premise, the two premises of Singer’s reconstructed argument are:

1. Suffering from the deprivation of basic education is something very bad.
2. “If it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it”(p. 3).4

What is important to stress here is that, according to Singer, the application of the second premise does not imply that moral obligation of the rich people depends either on the physical proximity or distance between rich and poor, or on the fact that there are many rich people who can help (pp. 4–5).

On the one hand, he argues that mere distance in space is in itself irrelevant to the determination of what one ought to do. “If we accept any principle of impartiality, universalizability, equality, or whatever”, says Singer, “we cannot discriminate against someone merely because he is far away from us” (p. 4). This is, in fact, his
answer to the following frequently used objection to help poor countries: “suffering outside one’s country just is not something one has a duty to help alleviate, because those suffering belong to a different society, and hence a different moral community. Duties arise between members of single communities, bound by ties of mutual cooperation and reciprocity” (Dower, 2000, p. 279).

On the other hand, he refuses the view that numbers diminish moral obligation. In his opinion “it does not matter morally to the question, what you ought to do, how many people could help the situation” (p. 5). In addition, it seems that he also thinks “that the causes of poverty are irrelevant to our moral obligations to the world’s poor”.

Consider now, once again, the two aforementioned premises:

1. Suffering from the deprivation of basic education is something very bad.
2. If it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.

The conclusion, which follows if we accept both premises and assume that people in rich countries can prevent the deprivation of basic education in poor countries, is: people in rich countries have a moral obligation to help those in poor countries. Therefore, the answer to the question – of whether we ought to help to reduce the deprivation of basic education in poor countries – is affirmative. But, how should we understand “ought to”? According to Singer, it should be understood as a duty. Therefore, we have a duty to help to reduce the deprivation of basic education in poor countries. This means that such help should not be considered as an act of charity or what “philosophers and theologians have called ‘supererogatory’ – an act that it would be good to do, but not wrong not to do” (Singer, 2008, p. 7). Charity is not an obligation. It is “something that we are free to do or to omit” (O’Neill, 2008, p. 147). The claim that we have a duty to help others is, therefore, much more demanding than is usually the case in our understanding of our moral obligations. The usual interpretation of one’s strict duty is: not to harm others. But helping others is morally optional (Singer, 2008, pp. 6–9).

But why do we have a duty to help others? “Some would see it as a specific duty to alleviate suffering; others as an important implication of a more general duty of beneficence – a duty to promote good, of which reducing evil is an important part. Again, the duty may be based on an appeal to justice: either to the realization of rights or to some principle of ‘social justice’ which requires that we all have a responsibility to ensure that everyone’s basic needs are met” (Dower, 2000, p. 278).

However, our moral duty to help to reduce the deprivation of basic education in poor countries because we ought to reduce evil and promote good, is quite different from our duty to do this as a matter of justice. For, the “idea of justice does not simply cover what individuals do to one another but also covers the general structures” in a society (pp. 274–5). In Singer’s analysis, as we have seen, a duty bearer is mostly an individual facing a moral choice, although the government is
not excluded either. But “the problem with such an approach is”, as Michael Blake claims, “that, in the domestic arena, we have a focus not simply upon individual morality, but upon the moral evaluations of social institutions and practices”, that is to say, upon, “social justice, as distinct from morality” (Blake, 2005, online). The theory of “liberal justice does not concern itself primarily with such moral choices as Singer discusses, but with the ... legitimacy of the social system within which these choices are made. It analyzes”, what Rawls calls, “the basic structure of society, rather than simply the individual decisions made as to the use of resources. A fuller extension of the globalization of morality, therefore, requires an examination of the form and nature of the global society, so as to inquire as to whether the liberal principles ought not to hold at the global level as well” (ibid.). Blake thinks that “a logical extension of Singer’s analysis, then, is the examination of the institutions and practices which hold sway in the global arena, to see if these might not be governed by the same liberal principles which are generally applied only within the domestic context” (ibid.).

There have been a lot of interesting discussions about this problem during the last two or three decades. One of their main aims has been, as Philippe Van Parijs says, to find an answer to the following question: Should global justice be understood as social justice in the sense that the principles of justice, accepted at the national level, should be extended to all mankind, or should global justice be, just the opposite, understood as an inter-national justice, which requires the development of the principles that would enable fair interactions between nations or countries, which should be quite different from those principles that allow inter-individual equity within nations or nation states (Van Parijs, Vandelvelde, 2005)? This is the context in which the problem of global social justice and education should be discussed as well.

Some philosophers are convinced that the principles of justice, accepted at the national level, should also be applied to the world as a whole, although in this case, that principle would have to be put into practice by institutions other than those at the national level. Such principles are, for instance, the principles of equality, equal opportunities, equal educational opportunities, and so forth. Global justice, understood in this way, is nothing more than social justice extended beyond the borders of nation states. This means that the principle of equality should also determine justice at the global level (Miller, 2005). On the other hand, David Miller calls into question the correctness of such theories of global justice which understand global justice as the realization of the principle of equality at the global level. However, Miller’s opposition to these views on global justice do not derive from his possible indifference to global inequality. On the contrary, he finds the magnitude of global inequality both evident and shocking. He is also of the opinion that a just world would be a world in which there would be much less inequality than there is today. However, global inequality is relevant to him because of its effects rather than because it is unjust in and of itself. The main target of his critical analysis is the most persuasive and most authentic version of global egalitarianism advocated by several prominent political philosophers, i.e., the global equality of opportunity. Its essence
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lies in the fact that people with approximately equal talents and motivation must have equal life chances (for example, equal educational opportunities), regardless of the society in which they were born. This principle can therefore be understood as the global version of Rawls’s principle of fair equality of opportunities (ibid). What seems to be even much more controversial is whether his principle of difference should be included in the concept of global justice as well. Although Rawls himself in The Law of Peoples says that in the international sphere different principles should be applied, some other philosophers think just the opposite. Darrel Moellendorf, for instance, defends the idea of the global difference principle (Moellendorf, 2002).

But even if the concept of global justice includes only the principle of global equality of opportunity, we would – if Miller’s interpretation is right – find ourselves in major difficulties due to the fact that we could no longer rely on a common cultural understanding that would tell us what criteria it is appropriate to use when trying to compare different options at the international level. Since, for example, education has various forms in different parts of the world, the question is how we should judge whether a child in country A has better or worse educational opportunities than a child in country B.

Proponents of global egalitarianism, faced with this problem, could reply that at least in those cases when country A (any country in sub-Saharan Africa) is compared with country B (any EU Member State), no reasonable person could be in doubt that the educational opportunities available to children in country A are much worse than those available to children in country B. Miller admits that in such extreme cases it really becomes evident that the options available to the average children in Nigeria are much fewer than those available to the average children in France; and also that the existence of countries where basic education is not provided shows global injustice.

But he does not think that global egalitarianism, based on the principle of equal opportunities, can solve the problem of global injustice. On the contrary, he rejects the idea of global egalitarianism not simply because it would be utopian in a political sense, but also, if not first of all, because he is persuaded that it is based on the wrong principle (Miller, 2005, p. 59). For this reason he claims that “we need to work out new principles appropriate to the human relationships that exist at the transnational level” (Miller, 2008, p. 391). One such principle of global justice is for him “the universal protection of basic human rights” (ibid., p. 391). Since education is here understood as one of the basic human needs (“the conditions that must be met if a person is to have a minimally decent life in the society to which he or she belongs”), and basic human rights are defined as “rights to those freedoms, resources and bodily states that allow basic human needs to be fulfilled” (ibid., p. 391), it follows that the right to education must be universally protected as well.

According to Miller, therefore, the obligation to respect human rights worldwide is one of the conditions for global justice. A similar idea can also be found in the Preamble to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose very first paragraph states, inter alia, that the recognition of human rights which are the same for all people
is the foundation of justice in the world\textsuperscript{10}. It follows from this that justice in this world is greatly endangered if human rights – upon which global justice stands – are denied or violated. This also applies to violations of the right to education, which is guaranteed to everyone in Article 26, whose first paragraph says: “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education is compulsory” (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 26.1)\textsuperscript{11}. There is no doubt that this right, the exercise of which appears to be taken for granted in the developed world, is violated for many people and in many places. We can see this easily from the already mentioned information that more than one hundred million children are deprived of the most basic education. These and similar figures are indicative of two things. On the one hand, they bear witness to the injustice suffered by millions of children in different parts of the world; on the other hand, they highlight the huge differences in the global distribution of educational opportunities. Because educational opportunities are essential to ensuring equal opportunities and because without equality of opportunity there is no social justice, it is clear that great injustices are being done in the world in which we live. However, the injustices resulting from violations of the right to basic education as one of the fundamental human rights are far from being equally distributed. They mainly take place in the most underdeveloped and extremely poor countries. Hence, nationality or membership of a particular nation is today a much stronger factor affecting the inequality of opportunity than are race, gender, or even talent and ability, as it is nationality that determines different educational opportunities and access to labor markets and to quite unequal systems of social rights (Van Parijs, 2001). This, however, stands in stark contrast to the traditional concept of social justice, which requires that those who have the same abilities and equal will to learn must have not just equal opportunities for education, but also for success in education, irrespective of their social status, race, nationality, religion, etc. But is it necessary and appropriate to expand this understanding of justice to the global level? As we have seen, there is no unique answer to this question, which is one of the two key questions of global justice.

The answer of the proponents of global egalitarianism would probably be affirmative as their position is based on cosmopolitanism, in which it is assumed in a moral sense that every human being has the same value. To them, therefore, the nationality of a person is a completely arbitrary characteristic from a moral standpoint, and it should not affect whether or not someone has the opportunity to get an education. If, however, we accept this cosmopolitan argument, it immediately gives rise to the question of who in that case has the obligation to ensure equal opportunities for education to all people on the global level. One of the ways in which we can try to get the answer is the correspondent theory of rights and duties. Put simply, this means that every right has as its consequence the duty of someone else, either not to impede the subject of the right in exercising that right (when the right is freedom) or to provide conditions for exercising the right (in the case of social rights, for instance). As the right to education is one of the social rights, the person to whom
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The correspondent obligation belongs must ensure conditions for its realization to the holder of the right. The aforementioned Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent international conventions and covenants on human rights impose this obligation on States Parties. They have a legal obligation to ensure conditions for the exercise of these rights in their territory. The right to basic education is ensured by the majority of countries. However, some do not fulfill this duty. Some of them probably because they are so poor that they cannot do so, while others because they prefer to spend money on arming children with guns rather than with knowledge. The sad thing is that when it comes to violations of the right to basic education, the international community is, at the very least, helpless, if not even disinterested. In any case, at the international or global level, there are no appropriate mechanisms in place to enable effective action in cases where countries do not fulfil their duties, and, thus, violate this important human right. In such cases, according to Onora O’Neill, the role of the state should be assumed, or at least supplemented, by international institutions, transnational corporations, and nongovernmental organizations (O’Neill, 2001). This means that the protection of the right to basic education is not only a matter of local social justice, and, consequently, a duty of a particular state, but also a duty of global social justice, that is, a duty of justice in education which is global in scope.

At the end we can therefore conclude that the answer to the initially posed question as to whether duties of social justice in education are global in scope is affirmative. Both institutional and personal ethics approaches to global justice show that the duty to secure basic education is not limited to the governments of particular states. Basic education is a human right which should be universally protected. In other words, it must be protected for children everywhere. If a particular state which is first responsible for assuring basic education to their citizens is so poor that it is not able to do this, other institutions and individuals of the rich countries have a duty to prevent the violation of this right. This duty is a duty of global social justice also because it is an injustice if children anywhere in the world are left without basic education.

NOTES

1 A few years ago more than 121 million children were deprived of the most basic education, 15% of girls did not attend primary school in as many as 70 countries and in sub-Saharan Africa alone more than 45 million children did not have an opportunity to acquire elementary education (Spadano, 2005, p. 110).

2 A very similar question has already been posed by Nigel Dower in the context of world poverty (Dower, 2000, p. 273).

3 However, his argument is also “deliberately vague, since he wants his conclusions to follow logically from a variety of ethical positions—from his own consequentialism, on which we would have a duty to transfer our own resources to the point where marginal utility could not be increased, to a comparatively weaker position which would only entail that we give up wealth until something ‘of moral importance,’ needs be sacrificed” (Blake, 2005).

4 By saying that “without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable of moral importance” Singer means “without causing anything else comparably bad to happen, or doing something that is wrong in itself, or failing to promote some moral good, comparable in significance to the bad thing that we can
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prevent” (Singer, 2008, p. 3). Singer gives an explanation on how to understand the second premise in the following way: “If I am walking past a shallow pond and see a child drowning in it, I ought to wade in and pull the child out. This will mean getting my clothes muddy, but this is insignificant, while the death of the child would presumably be a very bad thing” (p. 3).

David Miller (2007, p. 237) argues that Singer’s the drowning child example is “a very bad analogy for thinking about responsibility for global poverty” since he “asks no questions about outcome responsibility for global poverty: he does not ask why so many are poor, whether responsibility lies with rich nations, with the governments of poor nations, etc. – he treats poverty as if it were a natural phenomenon like earthquake” (Ibid., pp. 234–7).

“Supererogation” is a term which means “paying out more than is due (SUPER-EROGARE)”, and it is used as a name “of actions that go beyond the call of duty”.

Charity lies beyond one’s duty. It is not required by justice: giving what is owed to one as his right. For this reason it is not the fulfillment of a duty for others’ rights.

However, the problem set forth by Miller is not a technical problem of measurement. It is rather the problem of how to determine what constitutes equality of opportunity in a culturally pluralistic world in which different societies create goods in different ways and also value and rank them differently. Namely, the problem of measurement does not occur just because it is, for example, difficult to determine how many educational opportunities a regular child in society A has, but also because the importance of education compared to other goods varies depending on location or the society in which the child lives. Such judgments are, therefore, possible only in extreme cases. And even then it may turn out that what appears as inequality is in fact extreme poverty (Miller, 2005).

For, as he says, if we set equality as our goal at the global level, justice will be so much beyond a realistic reach that most people will abandon every effort to achieve it.

“ Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity of all members of human society and of the equal and unalienable rights of the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Introduction).

The second part of this paragraph is not formulated as a right that the government must provide to everyone, but rather as an aim which the government should try to achieve; “Technical and professional education shall be made generally available. Higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.”

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