

Education and the State: International perspectives on a changing relationship, by Carla Aubry, Michael Geiss, Veronika Magyar-Haas, and Jürgen Oelkers (eds)

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Education and the State offers new perspectives on this long-standing and increasingly significant theme in educational research. It draws together papers based upon Europe, the USA, and Latin America. 'State' and 'education' are assessed in historical and culturally specific ways.

This edited collection is a wide-ranging book divided into four substantive sections. 'Comparing school systems' comprises two comparative papers. Miriam Cohen analyses the centralization of education systems in England, France, and the United States and questions the assumption that centralization has been a necessary conduit for the expansion of equality and equity. Rather, local political and social coalitions and contexts have to be taken into account. Gabriella Ossenbach focuses upon 'backward' countries in Hispanic America from 1870 to 1920 where, following independence, the Western liberal state became the dominant cultural and educational model that was pursued through general educational laws on compulsory education and in which literacy was an essential means of creating citizens. State education, which built upon an older bureaucratic, colonial tradition, fostered national unity while attempting to contain the tensions created by political and economic instability, the role of the Catholic Church, and rural–urban divides. The recent shifts of neoliberal policy, for example in Pinochet's Chile, have undermined elements of this interventionist state with, according to Ossenbach, disastrous consequences.

The second section, on 'financing education', includes two contrasting papers that link questions of finance to state education. Their juxtaposition recalls the distinction between 'truffle hunters' and 'parachutists' made by the French historian, Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie. Carla Aubry's chapter, representing the first camp, is a local case study of Winterthur in Switzerland from 1789 to 1869, and charts the ways in which ownership, control, and class intersected with one another to delimit citizenship and access to education for the wealthy burghers who were able to translate material resources into educational benefit. Conversely, the growth of the state was perceived as a force that embraced everyone and broke down the distinction between property holders and others. The broader sweep adopted by Vincent Carpentier bears closer resemblance to Le Roy Ladurie's parachutist. By engaging with long-term economic Kondratiev cycles, Carpentier scrutinizes educational investment in France and the UK in order to comprehend economic change, a welcome shift that does not look only to external theories in order to explain education. Countercyclical educational investment prior to 1945 helped to ameliorate economic recession and Carpentier suggests that this could be a way forward in the context of ongoing contemporary economic hardship.

The following section, on 'educational administration', contains a similar mix of extensive historical analyses with detailed excavations of particular historical moments. Michael Geiss challenges the stereotype of the pen-pushing narrow-minded bureaucrat by uncovering the written worlds of educational administrators in the Grand Duchy of Baden during a period of educational growth in the late nineteenth century. Their various writings on education contributed to a growing sense of professionalization and the autonomy of educational administration. The impulse to defend and bolster educational administrators could also come from external sources. For instance, Judith Kafka illustrates how, in the United States, teachers actively supported centralization, in part by involving increasing numbers of education professionals in school discipline. Educational centralization was thus nurtured by a local alliance of teachers and minority ethnic parents who feared discrimination from individual teachers. Yet in

the US, centralization has always been a prickly topic and Patrick McGuinn examines how the US Department of Education emerged out of a combination of cooperative and coercive relations between Federal and state governments. He argues that the robust tradition of defending the right of states to determine educational matters has in fact been gradually undermined, not least by the No Child Left Behind policy, which has been actively enforced by the Federal government. Apparently similar, yet distinct, processes are reflected in the German tradition of regional autonomy. Indeed, in assessing the organization of social work, Holger Ziegler assesses the ways in which a regulatory state has chipped away at the German welfare system and traditional forms of bureaucracy. Managerial technologies have undermined the notion of subsidiarity, central to the German constitution, and reduced the autonomy of front-line practitioners.

The final and longest section, on 'power, myths of community, and utopia', contains a variety of papers that are nevertheless linked in moving attention away from positive views of the liberal state. In analysing the history of schooling in Ireland during the hundred years following 1830, Deirdre Raftery picks up on W.B. Yeats's image of the 'kind old nun' in the classroom as a literary clue to educational history. She points to the continuing presence of the Catholic Church in primary and secondary education, which was achieved despite the growth of state education, not least through the proliferation of 'hedge schools'. Norbert Grube uncovers a less appealing side to the liberal state in the twentieth-century United States as it engaged with 'mass society', world war, and economic depression. Indeed, propaganda took on a pedagogical role, as proponents of mass communication such as E.L. Bernays and H.D. Lasswell presented themselves as public educators. Veronika Magyar-Haas distances herself further from the state in considering the concept of community in relation to the work of Helmuth Plessner in Weimar Germany as well as that of Jean-Luc Nancy in 1980s France. In assessing the ideology of community, she highlights Plessner's critique based upon 'ontological ambiguity' but ultimately sees most contemporary relevance in Nancy's rejection of the social and the idea of the 'singular plural'. In examining the history of school expulsions in Soviet schools in the 1930s, E. Thomas Ewing aims to provide insights into schooling in totalitarian societies but also notes that 'Stalinist pedagogy' bore resemblances to contemporary discussions of 'inclusive discipline', in the USA and elsewhere. Whilst discipline was closely connected to the Soviet political order and loyalty was demanded, there was also an impulse to keep pupils together within the collective context of the classroom. Finally, Jürgen Oelkers provides a historical overview of utopian writing, which he links to the German notion of 'Staatsromane'. Better education is seen to lie at the heart of utopian thought while democratic ideas have had a more ambiguous role just because they have been necessarily grounded in everyday life.

The eclecticism of these chapters testifies to the increasingly pervasive role of the state. They bring into perspective the tension between 'the State' and the state of society at large. Whereas in some settings the state is a ubiquitous force, as in the attempt of the liberal educational state to embrace everyone, elsewhere it is seen as a restricted or oppressive entity. Today, the increasing and widening range of the neoliberal state provides the basis for new historical explanation. Indeed, in questioning this neoliberal dominance, implicitly and explicitly, the book argues for the importance of history. The diversity of culturally located histories charted here represents a rejection of simple narratives and instrumental thinking. These histories stand as a counterpoint to the dangers of 'hegemonic norming' within the dominant global discourse.

Although *Education and the State* is aware of blind spots in our understanding of both 'education' and 'the state', it lacks a concluding summary that suggests ways forward. The absence of an overview of the key concepts explored in the book is curious given the interest shown in conceptual clarification in the introduction. For instance, it promises to 'bring education back in' to our understanding of the state but does not grasp the various meanings and practices of

education, or the state for that matter, that are pursued at different points. A few papers do clarify the aspect of education with which they are dealing, but the total contribution is less clear. However, each chapter is presented as a starting point with suggestive ideas and approaches.

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