

## Introduction

Back in 1994, a group of European educational researchers and professionals was invited by Peter Lang to a meeting in the University of Warwick. Despite being a diverse group in terms of areas of research, disciplines, work contexts, nationalities ... they all shared a common interest in a specific question that Ron Best formulates very clearly in this book: "Are we really committed to the education of the child as a whole person or are we only really concerned about their cognitive development?" (p. 21). The recognition of the significance of affect as a central component (not as an unfortunate by-product) of the educational process has been the motto for several joint initiatives – including a European network, research projects, participation in scientific meetings, publications, and organization of seminars for presentation and (intense and vivid) debate of our ideas and projects. This book is a tribute to this cooperative work and results mainly from one of our seminars that took place at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, of Porto University following the Midsummer Night of 2001.

This book is organized into three parts. Part One assembles a sequence of papers that discuss and reflect on contemporary challenges to affect and learning. Joaquim Coimbra deconstructs and denaturalizes the 'new' and 'growing' feelings of uncertainty and insecurity as "the *zeitgeist* of Western contemporary societies" (p. 3) and challenge us to question our extreme singularity and subjectivity and its consequences, by putting ourselves (and our feelings) in the social and cultural context and by reassuming responsibility for the world – implying here the recognition of the centrality of relationships in the educational process. Ron Best's emphasis on integrity – both as a "state of wholeness" and a state of "honesty, sincerity" (p. 14) – points out a possible way for schools and teachers to deal with this responsibility. However, he considers that recent educational policies in the UK interfere with this goal, points out several areas of neglect, and recommends strategies for fostering students' "capacity to form and sustain positive relationships with those different from ourselves" (p. 22). Furthermore, as Donata Francescato, Minou Mebane and Manuela Tomai stress, this is not solely a school endeavour: the communities we live in are also contexts for developing a shared identity and sense of belonging. The authors urge us to confront the myth of "the individual's responsibility in building his/her own destiny" by listening to the multiple "personal, community, political and cultural narratives" (p. 36) and suggest community profiling as a strategy for empowerment. Niels Kryger looks further into yet another context for children's learning, the new media, and critically analyses the ambivalent discourses surrounding this phenomenon: while some argue that the

"new media" reverse the traditional expert-adult/novice-child hierarchy in learning, others consider that "children should be protected" (p. 43) through an emphasis on the transmission of a cultural heritage. Illustrating this tension with the case of "Maria" he concludes that we must focus "on how children and young people socially and culturally deal with the new reality and how the transmission of cultural elements takes place" (p. 56). Finally, Mike Calvert, relying on the British experience of pastoral care, discusses the meaning and relationship between learning and caring acknowledging the malaise that surrounds the pursuit of *both* cognitive and affective goals in education – the whole person as Best puts it.

Part Two includes a series of research using both cross-national comparisons and specific national analysis. Peter Lang begins by advocating the "value of taking a comparative perspective" (p. 75), but defies us to consider some problems related to the definition(s) and meaning(s) of affective education, even if there is a growing reference to affective goals in educational reforms all over the world. However, Lang states that "this is unlikely to be enough to impact significantly on individual teachers' attitudes and responses" unless we win "their minds" (p. 88) – and comparative research might be useful to accomplish this. Arja Puurula, in a contribution that celebrates her love for the Arts and reminds us all of her emphasis on empirical evidence, uses the data of the European Affective Education Research and compares the attitudes of students and teachers regarding the importance of creativity development in the school. Interestingly, results show that "fostering creativity and talents were generally seen as important by the respondents, but teachers saw this as more important than students" (p. 98). Birte Ravn also discusses the data of a cross-national study, the ENCOMPASS, that involved both pupils and teachers from England, France and Denmark. She begins to discuss the various concepts of education in the three countries, showing how this implies different rapports between the academic and affective dimensions and illustrating the implications of these differences in the school organisation, in the management of "the affective domains of teaching and learning" (p. 107) and in the pupils' experience. Sean Neill presents a research study on the Key Skills Support Program designed to support teachers in dealing with the key skills approach. Results show that "experienced staff have more confidence (...) and are better able to use the facilities offered" (p. 128) and that students "seem to have derived more confidence from the knowledge they have gained via experience" of key skills (p. 133), even if their enthusiasm declined with time, which might be related to implementation problems associated with "the constant educational change impose[d] from above" (p. 134). Inês Nascimento, Joaquim Coimbra and Isabel Menezes present a study on the relational impact of parents' work from the

perspective of young adult children that reveal interesting intergenerational continuities: "when participants wish to be like their parents in the relationship with children they also want to be like their parents in the relationship with work" (p. 119), thus emphasizing the centrality of affect in the meaning-making of both work and parental roles. Shlomo Romi closes this section with a paper that uses affective education as a *rationale* for a therapeutic intervention program for dropout adolescents, the *Child and Youth Advancement*. The program combines personal guidance, completion of education, promotion of social values and personal skills interventions so that the adolescent will develop "the necessary educational foundation required by any person in today's culture" and "the basic coping skills with the social environment" (p. 156).

Part Three includes four chapters that analyse citizenship education in schools and beyond. Concepcion Naval presents a chronology of European research in the field that lists the major initiatives of various organizations, and concludes that there is an "international consensus on the need for democracy and the importance of education for its advancement" (p. 165). Taking the Portuguese curricular evolution in the area as a point of departure, Paulo Bento considers the different roles that citizenship education can assume: "as a social, political, cultural or religious control factor, as a measure of compensatory legitimation or as an emancipatory opportunity" (p. 169), and points out the limits of an unchanged "academic and sectional" (p. 171) curriculum. Pedro Teixeira and Isabel Menezes present a study with university students revealing some interesting relationships between students' perceptions of classroom climate – particularly teacher support, participation, innovation and knowledge diversity – and political attitudes and engagement, suggesting that we should "think of classrooms as places where citizenship is, whether we acknowledge it or not, in motion" (p. 183). Finally, Pedro Ferreira and Isabel Menezes consider the quality of life experiences of adolescents and young adults, "putting a focus on real life participation experiences and how these can be related to developmental outcomes" (p. 189) in the political realm, and concluding that when these experiences "provide individuals with opportunities for engaging in real and meaningful actions (...) balanced with an environment that promotes open reflection, interchange and dialogue" (p. 198) more complex and integrated modes of political thought seem to be encouraged, which might have relevant implications for the design of educational projects in the field of citizenship.

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*Isabel Menezes*