

The Principles of Education Described in Studying Education, an Introduction to the Key Disciplines in Education Studies, Edited by Barry Dufour and Will Curtis in Open University Press in 2011 in the UK

Abstract

This book in an accessible manner *examines education disciplines* in one handy volume. It provides well prepared study activities and extra notes to texts, figures and journals of particular education disciplines. In chapter one Barry Dufour presents an introduction to the history of education. Next chapter reveals the political, economic and social context for changes in contemporary education. The third chapter considers the fundamental philosophical ideas beginning with Greek philosophers and *taking us forward in time to today by looking at the influential educational ideas* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). Chapter four depicts the most significant areas of the economics of education. The main sociological perspectives in education are presented in chapter five. Next chapter presents behavior, learning and intelligence as parts of the psychology of education. Comparative education through the prism of research is presented in the last chapter.

Keywords: *history of education, politics of education, philosophy of education, economics of education, sociology of education, psychology of education and comparative education*

Introduction

The book has a student-friendly text and provides an accessible overview of the basic education disciplines. It covers the seven main subject disciplines and

involves the history of education, politics of education, philosophy of education, economics of education, sociology of education, psychology of education and comparative education. Each chapter presents a number of key themes and boxes that identify key research, studies, and publications. At the end of each chapter there are websites, journals and suggested books.

The history of education

In the first chapter Barry Dufour presents an overview of the history of education in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. In nine key themes the chapter reveals the most significant steps for education in the areas of elementary and primary education, secondary education, technical and vocational education. The author presents higher education: universities, women and education of the last 300 years. He pays attention to race, ethnicity and education, social class and inequality in education. Moreover, the role of churches and the issue of faith schools today are presented in this chapter.

The last key theme presents teaching, learning and the curriculum. In the 19th century pupils were taught in *'overcrowded classrooms, tiered lecture rooms, controlled by iron discipline, taught by strict teachers using chalk and talk.'* The curriculum was very narrow and comprised the three Rs—reading, writing and arithmetic (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). At the end of the century there were different subjects in the curriculum for boys and girls (cooking, cleaning, laundry and needlework).

In the 20th century there were two important dates: 1904 and 1988 in which school curricula were defined for secondary schools. In 1988, obligatory subjects were described for all children from 5 to 16 as a part of the Education Reform Act (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). In 1993 Ofsted was created, a semi-privatized inspection system, which *'was a policing and monitoring system concerned with compliance'*. Ofsted had a negative influence on the styles of teaching and learning due to the fact that it made teachers conduct teaching *using their professional skills and judgement in interpreting how they would deliver the National Curriculum* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

At the beginning of the new millennium, Blair's government launched a revised National Curriculum with modification of content and *the introduction of Citizenship as a new subject. It included a curriculum specification for key stages 1-4, suggestions about pupil democracy (involvement in the running of the school, school councils and skills such as debating) and community engagement* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

At the end of this chapter the author compared the UK with Finland in the context of the position in the world league tables for achievement in schools and universities. In the UK *the continuing drive by all governments since 1979 to raise pupils' standards of achievement* is observed (Dufour, Curtis, 2011), which created a competitive market of scores and league tables. One of the educationalists has described it as *the tyranny of testing and education by numbers* (Mansell, 2007). On the other hand, in Finland the success of education has been introduced by an enormous amount of money spent on schools and universities, *with no university fees, no school inspection, no league tables, no national testing* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). No education targets are observed in Finland. Students are not obliged to wear uniforms. There is no streaming or selection at schools.

The politics of education

In the second chapter, Clyde Chitty describes the most significant areas of focus in the politics of education. Education policy reflects the *views of the dominant groups at any particular time. Even decisions about the content of the school curriculum are essentially political ones, with central government and opposition groups determined to influence what goes on in the classroom* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

It seems obvious that modern education systems are the fields in which, according to Chitty, *different social classes and political groups meet and very often clash* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). The scope of varied education outcomes is related to balanced political forces at a particular period of time. After the Second World War we cannot come back to the *stagnant, class-ridden depressing society of the 1930s* (Simon, 1991). The 1944 Education Act was *like a cornerstone of the welfare state*, with secondary education for all pupils, who became *an integral part of an education system now viewed as a continuous process-ranging from the primary sector to further education* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

Moreover, the author mentioned the *Keynesian social democracy* introduced by David Marquand in the book "The Unprincipled Society: New Demands and Old Politics." From the mid-1940s until the mid-1970s, *most of political class shared a tacit governing philosophy*, which did not cover the whole spectrum of political opinion and did not prevent vigorous party conflict. The Conservative Party and Labour Party always differed fiercely about the *specific details of policy, particularly where education was concerned and on a deeper level, their conceptions of political authority and social justice* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

The formulation of education policy in the period of the last 30 years *was in the hands of government ministers, top civil servants, local education authorities and select group union leaders*. The Keynesian Social Democracy broke down from *the mid-1970s onwards when the influential role of civil servants and local authorities were to fall victim to increasing prime minister power* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). It was particularly observed during the period of Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair.

The philosophy of education

The last twenty years of the 20th century and the 21st century witnessed post-modernity restructuring culture and society. An increase in unpredictability and uncertainty, fragmentation and plurality are observed. The western world is characterized by concepts such as *fast-paced, consumerist, multicultural, globalized, free and individualistic*. These changes influence education, too. Emergence of an educational *marketplace with parents shopping around for the best educational experience for their children* is observed (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

The last thirty years present a scope of learning which includes a huge increase in the *numbers continuing into further and higher education onto a far wider range of courses*. There are greater opportunities for less traditional forms of learning, such as *home schooling, distance, online and lifelong learning*. Changes in society result in an assortment of new philosophical questions about curriculum. *Can a National Curriculum encompass all the interests and needs of its citizens? How far should schools representing particular sectional interests have freedom to develop their own curricula? What might religious education look like in a society with a plurality of religions and increasing secularization?* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

The proliferation of new technologies gives numerous curriculum opportunities and enables pupils to communicate with other pupils in the world. The *history of education is what good teachers do as part of their daily lives: informed by historical and contemporary ideas*. Good teachers think in a critical and reflective way about professional practices and *the purpose and scope of educational activity* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

The economics of education

The chapter consists of five key themes. In the third key theme Rebecca Allen discusses equity in the distribution of education. The author mentions *normative*

economics –the study questions concerning what society should do–*principles of social justice with efficiency as a goal of resource allocation*. Moreover, she claims that economists working in education can analyze *the distribution of educational access* and whether *educational outcomes are equitable* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

In the subchapter *Equity as concern for the least advantaged*, Allen presents a correlation between the *child's ability and household income at the age of 11*. She argues that children who are able to progress to *academic grammar schools will always be disproportionately from wealthier families*. Furthermore, she takes into consideration the fact of purchasing performance on an academic entrance test by wealthier families. It can be done in two ways. High income family children can be taught in private primary schools or *purchase private coaching in the years leading up to the test* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

Key theme four presents the labour market for teachers. It reveals facts, retention of teachers and paying teachers for the performance of their pupils. The three features are typical of the UK labour market that the government *is acting as a monopolist by depressing wages and leaving a shortage of teachers who are willing to work at the going rate*. Firstly, there is a lack of maths and science teachers. Secondly, the government uses perks to *attract additional teachers without having to raise the pay of existing teachers* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). Thirdly, there is a lack of well-qualified teachers due to the fact that people are employed who are not on the normal pay scale. The people come from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and do not have the qualified teacher status.

The sociology of education

In this chapter Richard Waller presents six key themes. Firstly, he tries to explain the term of the sociology of education. Secondly, he presents a brief history of it. In his point of view *education is linked to the economy providing employment skills, to the class structure in providing social fluidity and movement, and to democracy by offering individual fulfillment and opportunity* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

The industrial and technological *progress imposes growing demand for talent developed by the education system*, and western societies have a *democratic ideology based on freedom and opportunity*. The author sees the link between people's social background and their educational achievement weakening, as *all human resources are developed to maximize economic productivity* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). Abilities and motivation become dominant selection criteria for the best-paid and the

most prestigious positions. Moreover, according to Waller society becomes more meritocratic and class origin and destination are getting weaker.

In the subchapter *The middle classes and social closure* the author quotes Giddens: *recruitment is based upon demonstration of specialized competence via competitive examinations or the possession of diplomas or degrees giving evidence of appropriate qualifications*. For the author, middle class has no property or wealth to pass to its children, so transmitting their privileged position is *done through ensuring they gain the necessary qualification to stay ahead in the race for social privileges* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

The psychology of education

In this chapter, Dianna Gallard and Angie Garden try to answer the question what is the psychology of education. According to the authors, psychology enables to understand human behavior and reveals how *motivation and engagement impacts on our educational attainment. It helps to explain how both genetic inheritance and life context* can influence the ways we learn within educational provision available to children and young people (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

In the subchapter *Motivation, self-esteem and classroom relations* the authors discuss the psychological-theoretical framework presented by Jerome Bruner. In Bruner's opinion learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts which are based on actual or past knowledge. The learner *selects, transforms information, constructs hypotheses and makes decisions*. According to Bruner, self-efficacy, which is a form of self-esteem, influences *children's perceptions for their own academic abilities* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). Moreover, there are role expectations as a set of norms for teachers and students. We need to strike a balance between the teacher's role in the context of controlling, teaching, authority and students' behavior.

In the subchapter *Moving beyond IQ tests*, the authors claim that IQ tests are significant in predicting academic performance. Moreover, they are useful in measuring the domain of intelligence based on mathematical, logical, linguistic and special reasoning. In 1983 Howard Gardner, who was a coordinator of *Project Zero from 1972 to 2000* at Harvard in the USA, *defined intelligence as abilities and possibilities believed to lie within us*.

He believed that there is a *multitude of intelligences, quite independent from one another*. In Gardner's 'multiple intelligence theory' *neuro-biological work is related to brain organization, including work with brain damaged patients and gifted*

children. Furthermore, there is a *relationship between intelligences and the different cultural context within which we can operate*. Gardner distinguished the individual differences *we may have as humans as socially adaptive* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). In an educational setting this implication of having a range of intelligences can help professional teachers to construct an educational programme that takes into account various intelligences and better job prospects.

Comparative education

The last chapter of the book presents a definition of comparative education, the complexities of comparing systems *and practices across Europe and the world*. In key theme 7 Debbie Le Play, the author of the chapter, presents the aspects of global education, global learning and citizenship. There is an observable *link with global citizenship*, which is evident especially after the terrorists attacks of *September 2001 in the USA, of March 2004 in Madrid and of July 2007 in London*. Countries which are involved in UNESCO try to embody their principles in their *schools through programmes and initiatives that focus on citizenship* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011).

The Ruskin Speech of 1976 presented by James Calaghan in the UK was a so-called 'desire' to find out solutions to educational difficulties. *Politicians and educationalists began to look abroad for solutions to problems related to education*. Green (1999) describes *policy borrowing* as a *'by-product of governments facing common problems'* (Dufour, Curtis, 2011). Comparativists are involved in the process of analyzing the effects of *borrowing policy*. They check how ideas and approaches in education are adopted in one place and then how effectively they are transformed into another country.

Conclusion

Nowadays there are amazing educational opportunities not only for pupils but also for teachers. We observe the increasing use of communication and information technology in each type of school. Teachers can use a range of teaching and learning styles depending on students' age. In the political, economic and social context the authors try to present government policy and its consequences for education in the UK. They pay attention to three fields of research in the psychology of education: behavior, learning and intelligence. In the last chapter they present an

overview of comparative education, looking at various countries through the prism of comparative studies in other countries.

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