



## **Landscapes of Education and the New Role of Social Work**

### **International Models of How to Combine Formal, Non-formal and Informal Education**

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Landscapes of education are a new topic within the debate about adequate and just education and human development for everybody. In particular, children and youths from social classes affected by poverty, a lack of prospects or minimal schooling are a focal group that should be offered new approaches and opportunities of cognitive and social development by way of these landscapes of education. It has become apparent that the traditional school alone does not suffice to meet this need. There is no doubt that competency-based orientation and employability are core areas with the help of which the generation now growing up will manage the start of its professional career. In addition and by no means less important, the development involves individual, social, cultural and societal perspectives that can be combined under the term of human development. In this context, the Capability Approach elaborated by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum has developed a more extensive concept of human development and related it to empirical instruments. Using the analytic concept of individual capabilities and societal opportunities they shaped a socio-political formula that should be adapted in particular to modern social work. Moreover, the Capability Approach offers a critical foil with regard to further development and revision of institutionalised approaches in education and human development.

From an international point of view landscapes of education are development projects and implemented in various ways. In bringing together strikingly different learning and educational domains, various professions normally work together. Thus, an interdisciplinary approach is advanced that represents the real benefit of the models discussed later and the basis for a comprehensive further development of the children and youths involved. There are also some necessary changes on the organisational level. It does not only involve various activities controlled by the school, that is, the aim is not only to increase the purely cognitive capabilities of the children and youths in the interest of their school performance in opening the schools for such activities. The aim is on the contrary to foster the individual development opportunities of children and youths and to strengthen their capacity for social and societal challenges. This is a radical programme if it is combined with the requirements of the Capability Approach to provide also for corresponding chances of realisation on a socio-political level. What we are also given by the Capability Approach is an opportunity to develop the whole field of social work, which, however, demands great efforts if it is to be implemented beyond a declaration of intent. Landscapes of education must operate on these two levels – that is, both on the level of capabilities and of their structural realisation on a socio-political level – in order to be effective. For social work to cooperate in these landscapes, it is important to clarify its own role. If one takes a differentiated view, social

work is also not exclusively an educational institution. The term of non-formal education also clearly comprises institutions of youth work and youth welfare, as shown when one considers carefully the interaction relationships of professional social workers with children, youths and their parents. Social work in the context of educational action is always normative and also leads to corresponding educational processes in cumulative spirals with regard to education and human development: youths will adopt a different view of world and their role in it. Large international surveys, such as PISA, have pointed to the importance of the socio-cultural background for school students' academic performance. Thus, from the various viewpoints there is a common consent to extend the foundation of individual educational processes. It is now up to social work to specify and extend its role, which has traditionally been defined as support and control, by the terms of education and human development in order to undertake its task of implementing landscapes of education within the framework of a modern agency concept.

Nevertheless, it would be imprudent to speak of a generally accepted form of educational landscapes at this time. There is a multitude of approaches that in different organisations, with different intensities and for different groups of children and youths and their families tries to develop a perspective leading to a strengthening of their agency. This "Special Issue" presents reports from four different countries that reveal their respective approach of their national, cultural and educational standpoint. Each report, in its own way, is most stimulating and exemplary for the new approach of a methodical and educational and socio-political combination of elements and the spheres of formal, non-formal and informal education.

The Polish report by Maja Mendel and Tomasz Szkudlarek, both professors at the University of Gdansk, focuses on a comprehensive educational perspective on a community level that is exemplified by the plans and experience of two cities, Gdansk and Warsaw. Here the educational, socio-political and, in particular, local political frames are interlocked in such a way that a progressive concept for all persons involved arises as a result. It is especially this multi-perspectivity that may provide highly-interesting proposals for modern, open-minded social work which is reflected in the combination of the problem areas discussed.

The Dutch report written by Manuela du Bois-Reymond, professor at the University of Leiden, presents the innovative project that aims at a basic combination of school educational and structural renewal with non-formal activities. Moreover, this form of educational landscape is based on a broad acceptance by all persons involved which is a prerequisite for its success. Drawing on an existing differentiated range of activities and institutions is an advantage that arises from the virtually constitutive element of a lived social responsibility in the Netherlands.

The Danish report written by Niels Rosendal-Jensen, professor at the Copenhagen branch of the University of Aarhus, and Dorthe Brix, outlines an innovative solution whereby the socio-cultural educational context of children and youths, as it presents itself within the family, is further developed by special needs together with the school, so that the strains and stresses imposed on children and youths by the educational background within the family can at least be minimized. Thus, it is an approach that decidedly tries to impinge on the family socialisation with regard to education and human development. Although it is very specialized in this respect, it presents numerous possibilities that generally arise from a progressive conception of educational landscapes as innovation potential.

The report from Brazil written by Rogério Adolfo de Moura, professor at Campinas University, demonstrates the attempt to foster the role of extra-curricular activities for youths from the perspective of a country emerging into a new era and searching for a connection to a knowledge-based society. In the absence so far of a non-existing range of non-school cooperation partners for undertaking extra-curricular tasks the example presented tries to also win teachers for the development of a professional quality of those educational perspectives that are deemed important from the educational point of view.

All four reports are about the extension of the new educational field and its organisational implementation involving social, cultural, creative as well as sportive activities with the aim of providing the youths for opportunities of self-development and autonomy building which empower them to find perspectives for a fulfilled life on their own. With some reports choosing the Capability Approach as an analytical approach and, thus, targeting individual capabilities as well as their social opportunities, a remarkably productive possibility is illustrated of coping with the political challenges that are issued to an ever increasing number of youths. Landscapes of education are certainly no exclusive response to the diverse challenges of young people, but they are an exemplary basis for the implementation of an innovative approach to the combination of formal, non-formal and informal spheres of education and human development.

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