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Review of the new Springer Book Series “Cultural Psychology of Education”

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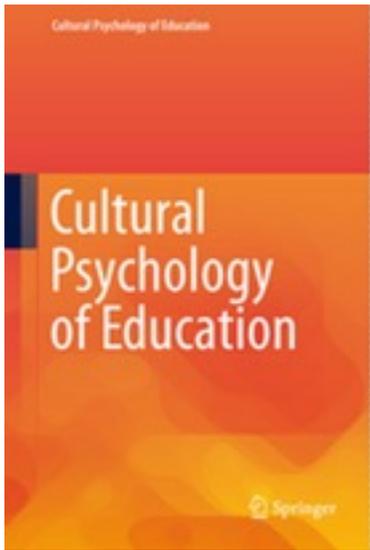
WELCOME TO COVENTRY



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Theoretical Psychology & Education



Psychology of Education seems nowadays to have put into the background theoretical investigation to privilege more empirical and applicative concerns. This trend is only partly justified by the challenges that the educational systems are facing worldwide, such as the multiculturalization of the classrooms and the increasing rhythm of innovation. The answer of the discipline has been focused on the small-theorizing and the medicalization of the object of study. By “medicalization”, I mean the focus on the performance, the disempairments and the pathologies of learning, the obsession with quantitative assessment, the comparative and cross-cultural aspects of education processes as a way to introduce a benchmarking approach to school. All these concerns can be perfectly legitimate, but focusing on the outcomes and performances of education has led psychology of education, the discipline that should study the processes of learning and teaching, which are the most typical developmental

Review of the new Springer Book Series “Cultural Psychology of Education” edited by Giuseppina Marsico

phenomena in psychology, to approach its object as if it were a non-developmental one. On the other hand, we seem to have forgotten that some minor characters of psychology, like Vygotsky, Lewin, Piaget and Bruner, to mention but few, understood that the psychology of education is a privileged field of study and development of grand-theories about human psyche. Those scholars intuited the relevance of educational processes to the development of the person, but also that the theories, methodologies and questions that were raised in the study of education could provide a fundamental knowledge to psychology at large. We desperately need today a renovated theorization in psychology of education. Yet, education has not been a major concern of theoretical psychology so far. So, on the one hand we have a psychology of education which is producing few theories to understand a stockpile of empirical data. On the other hand, we have theoretical psychology which is not fully involved in providing a long-range theorization in education. This is why a contribution in the direction of establishing a dialogue between theory and practice in education is strongly needed. Some moves in this direction are provided in 2015 ISTP congress, which is

presenting a look on the psychology of education and the issues of power relationships, a critical view on assessment, risk and inclusion, creativity, subjectivity and development. A further original contribution to fill this gap is made available by the new Springer book series “Cultural Psychology of Education”, edited by Giuseppina Marsico, from the University of Salerno, Italy. Unlike the existing series on Psychology of Education, the new production is aimed at providing both an overview to the current trends in the field, especially outside the Anglo-American context, and a constant introduction of innovative and edge theoretical concepts. The focus of the series is on the liminal phenomena in education (e.g relationships, transitions and negotiations occurring between different contexts, such as school, family, formal and informal education, school and work, etc.). Yet, it is the first series specifically presenting the approach of cultural psychology in education, combining psychology, anthropology, sociology, education sciences and history to understand the relationships between the developing person and the educational contexts and to provide new theories and qualitative methods. The emphasis on developmental processes, contexts, sense-

making, theorizing and borders places this series outside the current horizon of educational psychology. Everything in the book series is meant to provide a counter-hegemonic and refreshing view of the future trends in cultural psychology of education: from the editorial board which includes representatives from the truly global perspectives of the discipline in the five continents; to the innovative theoretical approaches applied to the field, such as the developmental sciences, the dynamic systems theory, the dialogical perspectives on the development of the self within educational contexts, and the role of various symbolic resources in educational

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processes. The new scientific proposal is challenging us to overcome the cross-cultural and hegemonic approach to educational phenomena and to assume a theoretical and methodological stance more oriented to the understanding of what takes place “within” and “between” contexts to grasp the peculiarities and manifold aspects of education as development, to focus on the process rather the outcomes and the potentialities rather than the benchmark. The new philosophy of the book series is exemplified by the first two volumes being published in 2015. The first book is “Educational Contexts and Borders through a Cultural Lens. Looking Inside, Viewing

Outside”, edited by Marsico, Dazzani, Ristum and Bastos. The volume focuses on the relationships between actors, practices and borders in different educational contexts. Scholars and educational experts, including Brazil, Argentina, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom provide hints on what happens at the border in different cultural contexts and what the relationship is between the educational setting and the other life contexts or micro-cultures. The second volume published by the end of 2015 is meant to celebrate the 100th birthday of one of the most relevant scholars in contemporary psychology: Jerome S. Bruner. Though his contribution to psychology of education has been massive, his theories and the implications for psychology have been today reduced to an impoverished version of the “cognitive revolution”. Yet Bruner oeuvre has still a lot to say in terms of unexplored possibilities. The book “Bruner beyond 100. Cultivating Possibilities” is collecting contribution from Bruner’s students and colleagues worldwide that will try to use his legacy to look forward to the future of psychology, exactly in the spirit that Bruner himself is still interpreting. Thus, no celebration but a “genuine interest for the emergence of the novelty” and the potentialities that Bruner’s work in cultural psychology can still develop, with concepts such as ambivalence, intersubjectivity,



purpose, possibilities, wonderment. The new book series will provide a challenging contribution to theoretical and methodological development of psychology. That’s why ISTP members are likely to follow this production with interest, both as a source of hints that could renovate the role of educational psychology as an incubator of concepts to be transferred to general psychology, and as a potential arena for testing new theoretical ideas in the complex, manifold, ever-changing world of education.

Springer Book series “Cultural Psychology of Education”: <http://www.springer.com/series/13768?detailsPage=titles>.