Forms of school work between conflits of methods and development of practices

Nicolas SEMBEL

School work: definition, history and engine of a socio-historical object

The aim of this paper is to build the school work as a socio-historical object. While academic work is often perceived as "what the school wants" from students (effective, it enables students to succeed; ineffective, it led to failure), it should rather be defined to a sociological perspective, as the report of students to what school wants. School work would then consist of all that is done by students, more or less in line with the framework and requirements school, which is of an intellectual work. The sociological approach highlights a tension constitutive of school work so defined, criticizing its institutional history to highlight its history "from below" by the actual practices of students and their actual interactions with the school institution, which it is also redefined. When replacing then this sociological approach in a historical perspective, it is possible to formulate a socio-historical hypothesis, that the engine of school work is a product of anthropological tension, standing in the long term, between the actor and the system. The school work as a socio-historical object of research feeds the opposition between the economy of the simplification of learning, which tends to "naturally" any educational institution, when the resistances are not too strong, and the economy of subjectification through work, which also tends "naturally" the student, when the school selection is not too strong. School work redefined socio-historically is structured around the opposition between intellectual interest and intellectual competition. It produces, among other things, a unique historical figure: an "heretic" school worker, characterized by a special relationship of autonomy to the school institution, the "conflictual disengagement" (Eigensinn).
Bernard REY

Teaching work and scholastic transmission

In this article, we suggest that one cannot analyse teaching activities without referring to the anthropological form of transmission in which it is realized. Indeed, in modern societies the transmission of societal practices from one generation to another is mainly organised under a didactised form (“une forme didactisée”). This means that these practices are not transmitted through the action and the ordinary conditions of their realisation, but in a secluded place, such as a school, and through speech. We reveal how speech tends to take a textual form, and yet the access to the text constitutes a major difficulty for students because it imposes a way of giving meaning to the utterance which is unusual or even unknown to them. Therefore, the teacher’s activities consist in finding ways to resolve or to sidestep this difficulty. However, it turns out that each of these solutions, while partially solving a problem, genders new ones, which makes the work of teachers ceaselessly theatrical.

Catherine DELARUE-BRETON

Heterogeneity, implicit tensions and influences on the working formats proposed to the pupils in the teaching/learning of the first language at school

The relationship between educational research and the working formats as proposed to the pupils within the class is, as regards the teaching/learning of the first language, rather opaque. Occupying an intermediate position between didactics and school working formats, the teaching practices, confronted within the class with a heterogeneous and unstable reality, but also often liable to prescriptions which present little homogeneity, add a central dimension to the complexity of the analysis. We suggest here evoking some of the recurring phenomena susceptible to embody the educational practice, and, consequently, to impact the working formats proposed to the pupils. These come within the scope of a certain heterogeneity or of tensions which risk, because they are applied without the actors being aware of them, to damage the coherence of their interventions; they are thus situated, while being not totally foreign to them, below explicit quarrels which sometimes give rise in the social sphere to debates. They act in a more subterranean, but no less powerful way. Some of them are inherent to the taught object, the first language; others are rather connected to the specificity of the educational relation, and concern in particular the implementation of the devices of learning.

Christine DEL NOTARO

An opened situation in mathematics: dialectical reports between Theory – Experiment – Contingency

This article departs from the results of a research (Del Notaro, on 2010) and suggests describing some phenomena observed in the contingency of the practice of primary teachers, in mathematics. The observation of the effective practices allowed us to bring to light a phenomenon in our doctoral thesis, which we named the saturation of the environment (“saturation du milieu”). We show how this phenomenon constrains the practices and
present the way we proceeded and which contributed to bring an end of the confusion. The set up device is to be envisaged as an interaction of knowledge between the experimenter and the pupils: sets of tasks (“jeux de tâches”). We explain besides, how, by an effect of didactic transposition, an apparently opened situation is confined when found in an exercise book for the teachers instead of circulating between the various worlds for which it is nevertheless intended: first of all, the “noosphere” from which it arises, then, that of the school for whom it was conceived, then that of the training which tries to exploit it and finally, that of the research which uses it with the pupils and analyses the effects.

Pierre-François COEN

The real impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on school form

New technologies have fundamentally changed the present world. The generalized use of computers and in particular Internet has not only modified the relations between people but also their behavior towards information and knowledge. School also takes part in this process and a lot of countries have organized numerous programs to integrate ICT into education. This ICT integration requires modifying teaching practices and the organization of formal education. This paper deals with the real impact of ICT on several dimensions of the organization of formal education such as knowledge and its mediation, learning in these new environments, roles of education actors as well as transformations of teaching-learning devices.

Laetitia PROGIN ROMANATO & Monica GATHER THURLER

Cooperation between Teachers and new Approaches in Organizing School Work

This contribution aims at highlighting the links between innovating forms of school work and the relationships existing between teachers who try to reach professional cooperation. We seek first to show that individualism is partly rooted in the forms of organization of school work closely related to the functioning of our systems. We then analyze the specificities and constraints involved in the implementation of a professional co-operation that we consider to be one of the conditions necessary for teachers to develop forms of school work better suited to the context of their institution. We finally conclude by presenting the “professional learning community” within which the practices of cooperation depend on five “pillars” which are at the results of the attempts that various actors undertake to develop the quality of teaching and learning.

Frédérique WANDFLUH & Olivier MAULINI

Fighting school failure and new forms of school work: the case of an educational institution in the Geneva suburbs

The fight against school failure has been and still is a powerful tool for questioning and reshaping forms of school work, without opposing the intention to reform in order to do better and the intention to maintain the existing organization, while making it explicit to the students so that they
can take advantage of it. We present and analyze the work and the renewal of the organization of teaching activity as they were conceived and practiced during fifteen years by an elementary school in a popular neighbourhood in the suburbs of the city of Geneva. In the framework of, and then in the margin of a reform aiming at introducing multi-year learning cycles instead of repeating classes, the teaching staff of Bachet and some partners researchers has gradually (and collectively) developed a modular organization of basic learning, based on a hierarchy of objectives et taking into account the unique needs of students. After a brief presentation of the political context and the theoretical framework of the research-action, we will demonstrate how and why the forms of school activities have progressively evolved in this school. We will then present the questions raised by the teachers in an era of increasing political control over public education, when teachers have the feeling that their autonomy and the meaning of their work might partly escape them.

Claude LESSARD & Abdoulaye ANNE

Student Evaluation Policy and Media Coverage of a Professional Controversy: or how Pedagogy and « Common Sense » clash

This article analyzes the role of media in educational controversies. The case study is the Quebec media debate on the student evaluation policy associated with the reform of primary and secondary education programs of study, initiated in the late 90s. We identify the terms of the debate, as built by the media, and in reference to the three dimensions of legitimacy of Suchman (1995). The article illustrates the potential effects on the work of teachers of opposition to educational policies and standards set by ministerial authority, by external actors such as journalists. This analysis reveals that during the debate on the evaluation of student learning, the trial is made of the Department of education, of its precipitation and of its lack of preparation, resulting in a challenge of the pragmatic and cognitive legitimacies of the evaluation policy. But the trial is also that of an educational and moral conception of schooling. In this aspect, the debate exceeds the specific and restricted content of student evaluation and challenges a set of ideas – otherwise reduced to a caricature – which are seen as having dominated the second half of the 20th century and as being responsible for the repeated failure of systemic reforms and local attempts to improve schools.

Varia

Loïc CHALMEL

Risking Pedagogy, between heritage and modernity

Distrusting models claim to universal and claiming an unwavering commitment to a singular experience, educator’s subjective “place”, however, appears to be a rich area of intellectual creation in tension between theories and practices. Conservatory memory value choices made by particular individuals in particular socio-historical context, it collates all the alternatives that can be examined further, suggesting benchmarks for action, if only the “following” does not lose memory...The historian of pedagogical ideas involved in this duty of memory, remodelling materials of the past without reproducing the same. The transition from education to
history is not just a matter of epistemology: writing the history of educational ideas, it’s both be able to project themselves into the world of other, supportive of his loneliness, and to understand what motivates choice, forced his freedom of action, deconstructing a functioning unit to clarify the linkages between different types of knowledge that constitutes it.

Céline CHAU VIGNE, Richard ETIENNE & Loïc CLAVIER

Elements for a history of citizenship education : from the French public school to upper secondary school : what issues are at stake ?

Citizenship education mirrors our society, grappling with social, political, and economic fluctuations of the period. From 19th century civic and moral instruction on behalf of the State, to the democratic individualism of recent years, citizenship has mirrored the tensions of society that permeate school. The role of citizenship at school and in society and the issues that are at stake are in constant upheaval. They encompass four periods that this article will attempt to highlight, thus outlining the broad conceptions and implementations of citizenship into schools, in its complexity and its precariousness.

Jean-François MARCEL & Cécile GARDIES

The double component of the librarian’s work in agricultural education

The double component of the librarian’s work in agricultural education invites us to question the elaboration processes of professional identity. From a theoretical point of view, our analysis leans on two processes contributing to producing professional identities through a common mechanism, the “identity bargaining”. The “categories of identity analysis” and the “elementary forms of professional identity” (Dubar) are also conveyed. The positioning of the librarians compared to other teachers in the school is understood through the distinction Strauss proposes between “segments” and subgroups constituted by “fellowship circles”. An active research, the purpose of which was to analyze professional activities of a librarian that would have been “forgotten” in prescriptions, allows us to highlight three analysis elements of the professional identity construction : the library as a subjective transaction area, the librarians as a fellowship circle and at last, the relation to the job as an “identity bargaining” area. Three interconnected identity figures (Janus as a tutelary figure, Sysiphus in the background and at last the rising figure of the resilient) stand between “inherited identity”, “attributed identity” and “pursued identity” but clearly testify the tension between those three poles.