

Education: What for and why?

Symposium at University of Gdańsk

Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Education
Ul. Bażyńskiego 4
80-952 Gdańsk, Poland

12 – 13 June 2017

Keynotes:

Jan Masschelein (Catholic University Leuven, Belgium)

Sharon Todd (Maynooth University, Ireland)

F. Tony Carusi (Massey University, New Zealand)

Maria Mendel (University of Gdańsk, Poland)

Tomasz Szkuclarek (University of Gdańsk, Poland)

This symposium takes as its theme what we think is a fundamental set of questions about education: what for and why? The move to such a bare question is an acknowledgement that the traditional ideologies that once offered ready-made responses to the purposes of education have been and continue to be destabilised. How does one link education to economic prosperity in a policy climate of austerity? How can pluralism be a purpose of education in a nation where xenophobia elects its political leaders?

Historically the question of why education highlighted tensions between a triad of modern political ideologies, where conservatism would demand that education takes care of the transmission of cultural values, socialism would demand that education brings social justice, and liberalism demands that it takes care of individual growth. The current decomposition of these ideologies seems to leave education alone vis-a-vis the demands of the global market, which simply means that education is an instrument for economy. And as we have heard for over thirty years now, *there is no alternative* to that economic rationality.

In meantime, a very interesting body of theoretical works have emerged where education is treated as valuable in itself, which often means that scholars who pursue this idea try to revitalise the ancient meaning of education, or to differentiate “education proper” from other forms of institutional learning, transmission of culture, or cognition.

The question we want to address in this context is one of instrumentality.

What does it mean for education? And what is it at all, in ontological terms? Does education really need external aims – and if so, what are they nowadays? Is education necessarily an instrument of something else than itself? How does it relate to politics, economy and identity? And in case it does not, why should one care about it?

The *Education: What for and why?* symposium at Institute of Education, University of Gdańsk, is organised as an accompanying event of a meeting of scholars participating in a shared research project. It will gather renowned theorists and philosophers of education who have devoted their work to redefining education amidst the decomposition of its thus far dominant rationalities, as well as younger researchers who want to share their ideas in an open and challenging discussion. Our intention is to create a setting in which conferees could take part in working sessions (“keynote symposia”) in which invited researchers discuss the possibility or impossibility of non-instrumental education, and present and discuss their own papers relevant to the topic of the conference.

We invite proposals from the subfields of the humanities and social sciences. Proposals will be selected based on their engagement with the conference question of “what for and why” and their attention to the relationship between education and instrumentalism.

The event is intended to be a **small**, low cost, two-day symposium. Apart from invited key-note presenters, we plan to accept 20 papers (in English) for presentation in consecutive sessions. We will try to avoid parallel sessions, so that all participants can share all ideas presented during the symposium.

By March 15th 2017, Candidates who would like to participate in the symposium should send the abstract of their proposed presentation to the following address: tomasz.szkuclarek@ug.edu.pl. A limited number of participants not willing to present their own papers can also be accepted on the basis of their e-mail sent to the same address.

The abstracts will be reviewed by April 1st 2017, and the decisions of acceptance will be sent as soon as possible after that date.

The conference **fee** of 80 Euro should be paid before May 10th in the Polish currency to the bank account number provided in the letter of acceptance. The fee will cover the meals, including the conference dinner, and an on-going coffee service.

The costs of **travel and accommodation** should be covered by participants themselves. Gdańsk has both regular and budget (Ryan, Wizzair, Norwegian) air connections with numerous cities in Europe. Inexpensive accommodation can be found in hotels and tourist hostels around the city as well as in the adjacent cities of Sopot and Gdynia. As Gdańsk is a popular tourist destination, an early booking of accommodation is recommended.

We hope to see you in Gdańsk !