

7. SWG Reports

1. Standing Working Group: Teachers' Critical Thinking

Annual Report (2014)

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The Special Working Group (SWG) on Teachers' Critical Thinking proposes the theme Critical thinking in the teaching world.

The concept of critical thinking tackled in this standing working group should be understood in a stronger sense than just protests and claims made through the channel of ordinary trade unions and political parties (though unions and parties can sometimes be relays of such a thought). By *thought*, we understand a kind of discourse that is part of a true intellectual and rational development, giving consistency or even a form of logic system, to arguments and ideas (around operations of conceiving, judging, reasoning) – and not just opinions, even coming from particular individuals or groups. In coordination with this definition, “critical” refers to the tendency of a mind that does not allow any statement without having experienced the rational legitimacy, testing various discursive proposals with discriminating reason (the Greek verb *cringing*, from which comes the verb ‘*criticize*’ and the noun ‘*crisis*’, meaning originally *to sort*). The construction of the distance and externality, provided they comply with the requirements of rational argument, is thus the foundation of critical thought, in the sense meant by Theodor Adorno: “When the culture is accepted in its entirety, it has lost the ferment of its truth, which is *negation*” (Adorno, 1955, 1986).

Although it does not have a monopoly (a reactionary and undemocratic critical thinking can be envisaged), it is nevertheless in a movement that can be designated as ‘progressive’ (with its variants) that critical thinking is traditionally located in the 20th century; it is precisely this progressive perspective that this standing working group will take into account, which in educational matters induces material possibilities of alternatives claimed as democratic, more or less related to emancipation.

Critical thinking in the teaching world will be considered in several senses: thinking from teachers and/or educationalists as unique individuals; thinking coming from teachers organizations, networks, think tanks or groups operating as “collective intellectual” (Bourdieu, 2001); thinking from outside personalities influencing the world of teachers in one way or another; educational thought in a more generic sense, impacting the teaching practice. It will consider original examples of critical thinking, justified along the previous guidelines, or at least revisited at an original angle.

We anticipate papers responding to or framed by the considerations outlined above. Our general focus will be “thinking schools differently”, reviewing effective experiments or

plausible perspectives of change in educational systems, or in the design and practice of schools.

Sessions:

- Amsterdam 2010: 8 presentations in the presence of Thérèse Hamel
- San Luis Potosi 2011: 4 official presentations (with a large audience)
- Geneva 2012: 10 presentations
- Riga 2013: 10 presentations
- London 2014: 9 planned presentations

Publications:

- ROBERT André y ESPINOSA Julieta, coordinators, *Pensar la educación de otra manera: epistemología social y pensamiento crítico*, Juan Pablos Editor, México, forthcoming Spring 2014.
- Seven contributions in Spanish stemming from ISCHE 2010-2013 (Robert, Kerlan, Kahn, Naouar, Monin, Garnier, Riondet). This publication will be submitted in London in July 2014.
- ROBERT André et Bruno Garnier (dir.), *La pensée critique des enseignants, works stemming from ISCHE*, PURH, Presses Universitaires Rouen/Le Havre, in negotiation to be published in 2015. Provisional title.
- 15 contributions in French stemming from ISCHE 2010-2014.

To follow:

The SWG would like to carry on its activity during the next two years (2015 et 2016), reinforcing the call for international papers which was rather effective this year to mobilise few colleagues (South America and Spain) who hadn't been previously informed.

Thoughts about a special issue of a magazine, in addition of the two books earlier quoted.