

**LIFELONG
EDUCATION
AND
INTER-
NATIONAL
RELATIONS**

Ettore Gelpi

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ETTORE GELPI



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The Croom Helm Series in International Adult Education brings to an English-speaking readership a wide overview of developments in the education of adults throughout the world. Books are planned in this series of four different types:

- (a) about adult and continuing education in a single country;
- (b) having a comparative perspective of two or more countries;
- (c) studies having an international perspective;
- (d) symposia of papers from different countries having a single theme.

This study is of the third type, written by Ettore Gelpi, whose experience of lifelong education worldwide from his international position has given him a unique perspective upon this phenomenon. Because of this, the book locates education within international social and political systems in a fresh and revealing manner. It is a study that asks questions, queries established ideas, and is profoundly challenging. Yet it is a personal book, written out of concern and understanding and this, perhaps, makes it even more challenging.

Ettore Gelpi is Head of the Lifelong Education Unit at Unesco. He is vice-president of the Sociology of Education Research Committee of the International Sociological Association; founding member of Quale Societa (an association for the study of the problems of the division of labour), Rome; member of the Council of the University of Vincennes in Saint-Denis (Paris), and lecturer at the University of Paris I, Sorbonne and at the Collège Coopératif, Paris.

FOREWORD

I wish to express here my great debt to many friends who helped me in the translation of some chapters and in the revision of some others, particularly to: C. Griffin, P. Jarvis, M. Matsui, J. Rennie, R. Ruddock, D. Singh, J. Smith, R. South.

I am also grateful to other friends, associations and institutions who have included me in their activities and have thus provoked and stimulated my thinking. Hence some of the following chapters have appeared elsewhere, namely: Chapter 1 in *International Encyclopedia of Education* (Pergamon Press, 1985); part of Chapter 7 in *Dialectics and Humanism* (Institute of Philosophy, Warsaw, 1983); Chapter 9 in *Policy and Research in Adult Education* (Dept. of Adult Education, University of Nottingham, 1981); Chapter 10 in the *Scottish Journal of Adult Education* (1984); Chapter 16 in the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (1984). I am grateful for permission to reproduce these articles in this volume. In addition, I am grateful to Faber & Faber for permission to quote Jordan Burgess Coate's poem from *Hard Lines*.

Ettore Gelpi

CONTENTS

Editor's Note	
Foreword	
Author's Note	1
Part One: Introduction	5
1. Lifelong Education: Concept and Aim	7
2. The Meaning of Life and the Meaning of History in Some Contemporary Cultures	17
Part Two: The Economic and the Technological Dynamics	23
3. International Division of Labour, Educational Policies and a New International Order	25
4. Mobility of Labour, Technological Changes and the Right to Work	45
5. Living Without Wages	61
6. Youth and Adult Workers' Education	71
Part Three: The Search for and the Importance of Culture	81
7. Culture in the City, Rural Environment and Community Development	83
8. Migration and Creativities	97
9. Emerging Cultural and Educational Needs	105
Part Four: Educational Trends and Issues: Examples of Action, Co-operation and Conflict	117
10. Towards a New Educational Order: Encounters and Confrontation in Education	119
11. Intercultural Co-operation in Higher Education	129
12. The Human Sciences and North-South Relations	141
13. The Educational Implications of Recent Scientific, Technological and Cultural Exchanges between Japan and China	149

14. A Personal International Experience	160
15. Creative Struggles for Development	170
16. Lifelong Education: Opportunities and Obstacles	178
End Note	190
Suggested Reading	195
Index	199

1	Author's Note
2	Part One: Introduction
7	1. Lifelong Education: Concept and Aim
17	2. The Meaning of Life and the Meaning of History in Some Contemporary Cultures
23	Part Two: The Economic and the Technological Dynamics
25	3. International Division of Labour, Educational Policies and a New International Order
45	4. Mobility of Labour, Technological Changes and the Right to Work
61	5. Living Without Wages
71	6. Youth and Adult Workers' Education
81	Part Three: The Search for and the Importance of Culture
83	7. Culture in the City, Rural Environment and Community Development
97	8. Migration and Creativities
102	9. Emerging Cultural and Educational Needs
117	Part Four: Educational Trends and Issues: Examples of Action, Co-operation and Conflict
119	10. Towards a New Educational Order: Encounters and Confrontation in Education
129	11. Intercultural Co-operation in Higher Education
141	12. The Human Sciences and North-South Relations
149	13. The Educational Implications of Recent Scientific, Technological and Cultural Exchanges between Japan and China

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The awareness of the international dimension of education is growing, but relevant information is quite limited. Interdisciplinary work is needed as education is affected by developments in the political, economic, cultural, and social sectors. The dialectical nature of the relations between education and developments in the wider society is often ignored. In this book an attempt is made to avoid pedagogical romanticism or 'diplomatic' language in the exploration of these problems. A new international order of education is advocated as one instrument that can contribute to peaceful and just international relations and to a more meaningful world development.

International educational actors are people working independently, in educational institutions and in regional and international governmental and non-governmental organisations. Their goals are sometimes opposed, sometimes conflictory, and sometimes complementary and reinforcing. All unidimensional and universalistic interpretations are misleading: realities are much more complex. The merging interest in the international dimensions of education is promising, for, although new fields tend to provoke demagoguery and ambiguity, they also lead to the emergence of new energies and hopes.

The French painter Braque wrote that 'Conformism starts with definition'. I think he is right: this book is therefore not a book of definitions. But the reader will likely ask: 'What does lifelong education mean?' Although I will give it a definition, I consider this as other definitions such as those for 'basic needs', 'community', 'popular culture', and other central concepts as only temporary: all active concepts undergo a continuous process of enrichment in terms of interpretation, conception, definition and practice. With this in mind, it is possible to say that lifelong education is at once a concept, a policy, a practice, a process, a goal and an ideal, and that it applies to the whole lifespan of man. Moreover, it is an education that can develop anywhere; that occurs both within and outside institutions; that is both formal and non-formal, initial and continuing.

Education is equated with lifelong learning: support for this statements provokes harsh reactions, for in this perspective education becomes a significant and relevant means of transforming social and political life. Are international relations for new forms of domination

or perhaps for new forms of liberation? Can education play a role in the struggle for liberation? In the following pages ways for further developing human freedom are explored, along with the obstacles, the blind alleys and objective difficulties associated with activities directed towards liberation. Manipulation in international relations is widespread, and the risk that international 'co-operation' is damaging to the most perceptive researchers in different countries is real. Powerful countries can influence the national policies of the most peripheral countries through the active support, at the international level, either of people who are more docile or who favour their 'line'. Vested interests in the academic world or in governmental and non-governmental international organisations could also lead to the concentration of resources and personnel in irrelevant research topics, and to open and covert opposition to more significant inquiries and activities.

International relations have many dimensions: financial, economic, military, ideological, technological, scientific, cultural and educational. The levels of interdependence and dependence within international relations vary in relation to the power structures operating within and between the countries concerned. Even without their knowledge, international researchers and policy-makers in the field of education could be accomplices to the development and reinforcement of further dependency. On the other hand, they can also help to encourage international creativity and solidarity and to develop more meaningful education and cultural action.

Is it possible to define clearly the theoretical and strategical foundations for a progressive policy in international educational relations? It is easier to be precise about the goals of international educational relations than about universal principles and theories. These goals naturally reflect one's philosophy of life. My own philosophy has been influenced by the various cultures I have had the opportunity to encounter, to study, to live in and to love; and by determined people who have tried and continue to try to improve and transform the conditions of life of oppressed people and social groups across the world. My educational goals have been affected by my prior experiences. I am fighting for a non-dogmatic education that enables people to think by themselves and for themselves about the world around them and their roles within the communities in which they live, love and struggle. Education should be an instrument in social, aesthetic, political and economic struggles that seek to achieve social justice at the national and international level, that helps to develop the creativity of children, youth and adults and, at the same time, empowers them to

act upon and transform their world.

But how is such an education to develop? Educational theoreticians, educational policy-makers and educators must be sensitive to the varying cultural, psychological, political and economic dimensions of life within different countries. Solidarity, democracy, family ties, engagement, state, universality, nature, individual, mass — all have different meanings for different peoples and social groups because they reflect their differing practices, conditions, and ways of being and perceiving. We need to carry out sound analyses of the variety of meanings, but we must not forget that educational creativity is mainly the result of the social and cultural activities of the people themselves — popular action is not only dependent upon formal conceptual clarity. It is on popular action that education moulds itself. International technological scientific, financial and economic relations influence and change the framework within which education operates: it is the responsibility of those engaged in educational activities to find new ways to make education relevant and to reinforce popular participation in local, national and international affairs. Unfortunately, too often international relations in education are becoming the basis of new vested interests. Sometimes, resistance is the only answer to hollow calls for international co-operation. Sometimes, contradictions are impossible to solve because interests are opposed and mediation is hopeless.

Even in such situations, however, there are alternative courses of action from which to choose: one can remain a passive observer or, regardless of the moralistic criticisms of others, act to give a concrete meaning to international relations. Different people and social groups perceive objective international relations and of their relevance to community life differently, reflecting the wide variations in their concrete daily experiences.

One can assist them towards new ways of understanding and acting if one is sensitive to these differences in perception. I support the development of an education that allows a full use of human resources, that contributes to meeting individual and collective human needs, that reinforces mutual understanding and solidarity. Therefore, I struggle against all forms of racism that limit the full development of human capacities, against class and bureaucratic social structures that reinforce the conviction there are different levels of human needs in relation to the hierarchical status differences, and against all forms of imperialism, old, new and emerging, that impose the will of dominant groups and countries.

This book is concerned mainly with the relations between econ-

omics, culture and education at the international level. It explicitly criticises conceptions of education either as a completely independent or dependent variable in international economic relations, and of intercultural studies that fail to analyse the power structures that operate both within and between countries. The international division of labour, scientific and technological transfers, the ideological nature of commercial, cultural and educational enterprises do exist, and they do need to be analysed from an international perspective. At the same time, struggles against dependency, new forms of co-operation between peoples and countries, research for new foundations in international political life have to be made known and closely explored because they help to generate new educational thinking and practices.

The metaworld of international education is largely irrelevant if research and action become insular, or if it is used to help propagate sectarian ideologies or consumption models. On the other hand, international education could be of great relevance as more and more people have direct experience beyond their own national cultures. Educational curricula are waiting to be opened to the broader world culture. Educators are unsatisfied with narrow national programmes and with their parochial national training.

Are emerging tendencies orientated towards more internationalist or nationalist forms of education? What is preferable? Are tendencies divergent or compatible? Here again, a dialectic approach is needed. False internationalist ideals could transmit and impose new dependencies and national, cultural and educational identifications could be the means of opening up certain countries to the world.

An internationally oriented education is not easier to achieve than a nationally oriented education, and yet the international activity is multiplying.

Would it be possible to make this activity relevant to the building of an international democracy that allows peoples and social groups to be respected regardless of their level of economic development, their military strength, their race, social status or their worldviews?

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

There has always been lifelong education for some social groups. Whether it will become an instrument of liberation for all, or an instrument of domination for a few is not yet decided. It has many obstacles to overcome; the existing forms of education are very resistant to change. There are, however, numerous pressures for a wider opening of educational opportunity, and from experience in places throughout the world, it is possible to identify the problems it must face and the way in which it may go.

There is no universally accepted concept of education, and the same applies to the development of the concept of lifelong education. Educational ideologies have been and are closely linked on one hand to social and economic factors, and on the other to political, religious and social ideologies. Lifelong education, as expressed by different civilisations, reflects the specificity of those civilisations and their cultural traditions. The Greek *paideia*, the European Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment are not the only reference points of lifelong education. The original African communities have contributed to the socialisation of education and thus to its permanence in the social realm.¹ One could find several examples of this kind in different civilisations and different countries.

The concept of lifelong education at the end of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth has found new definitions and practices related to 'struggle' situations, to industrialisation and post-industrialisation, to international thinking and action, to more profound research into history and comparative education, to rediscovery of the cultural and educational identity of countries which have newly gained their independence.

Instrument of Liberation or Domination?

In many countries the history of education has not been examined from the viewpoint of the people² because external domination has been imposed through foreign educational values, suppressing educational and cultural traditions.³ Within contemporary societies and international co-operation, however, the history of lifelong education

8 *Lifelong Education: Concept and Aim*

cannot escape the question, 'Is it an instrument of liberation or of domination?'⁴

The spread of the right to education at the level of nation and social class during, for example, industrial revolution, decolonisation, social struggle, has not always meant emancipation and education for all, or education of some quality for those who receive it. It is often one-dimensional in that it is education for production, for good citizenship, or for the integration of the immigrant worker;⁵ for the inculcation of religious, political and consumer ideologies. The international division of labour, the result of the universalisation of markets, has often widened the gaps in formal education between social groups and between countries. Consequently, it has affected the educational systems of countries and the educational paths of individuals. In certain industrialised countries the tendency is towards the universalisation of higher secondary education and even of the first level of higher education; in others, for example certain developing countries, illiteracy still persists.

It is perhaps the complexity of lifelong education as a goal, policy, concept, practice, process, and particularly the dialectical relationship between these elements, which make lifelong education living rather than reified. Reification is in fact the great risk of lifelong education, because it means a schooling of society. Yet its basis will not be in the school, but in the much more global phenomenon of a structured lifelong education.

The confusion between lifelong education in society and the often enclosed world of its specialists leads, according to some views, to a limited and false vision of lifelong education in contemporary societies. Educational professionals are often seen as accomplices of power in reducing the cultural and educational creativity of the masses. Pedagogical discussion in its moralising, prophetic, futurological expressions often elaborates its own abstraction, and the practices of educational institutions seem to resist all changes. Perhaps, through what lifelong education for all has to say about policies and educational activities, the idea of struggle will appear in the educational field.

There is the struggle to give meaning to lifelong education as there have always been struggles in schooling: schooling or lifelong education for discovering creativity and developing the individual; schooling or lifelong education for domestication and manipulation? The path from the concept of lifelong education to its realisation is characterised by struggles in social life and educational institutions in such areas as: the type of relationship between formal and non-formal education, i.e.

dialectic or dependent; the contribution of such non-teaching educators as cultural, social and political movements to educational activities; criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the educational system, both internally and externally; the extent to which self-directed learning is encouraged, especially that of a collective nature.

Struggles go on in different countries, chiefly with a view to democratising or to reproducing social structures through education. Democratisations and reproduction⁶ are everywhere a basic theme of the educational debate. Lifelong education has been presented as a new route for spreading democracy, but often the realisation of this concept has once again meant the reinforcement of the existing social structure. Mere quantitative expansion of education and culture does necessarily result in the creation of democracy. To think of democratising while retaining the same goals, teachers and curricular content is either to be naïve or manipulatory, but in any case it is a hopeless enterprise. The relationship between culture and education often encounters obstacles and engenders anxieties, posing the question whether one may expect educational experiences to evolve from formal training to enquiry, from direction to discovery, and from boredom to pleasure.

Education for All

The emergence of new publics, the expansion of leisure time and the increase in the number of educational premises reflect the possibility of education for all; it could occur from earliest childhood to old age at work or in leisure, in the school or in the community. But these changes often cause disquiet to those in power since they neither control this expansion nor its emergence. On the one hand, there is a reinforcement of the formal educational system (often in response to public demand), and on the other there is overt or hidden repression of spontaneous educational and cultural demonstrations. The contradictions between living culture and the contents of schooling are at the root of increased educational demand and at the heart of the crises in educational institutions, particularly in industrialised countries.

The Copernican-type of revolution in education, of education for all and by all, disconcerts the professionals of initial and continuing education, but educational demand lies, perhaps, in this direction. The young who have to repeat a year of school get bored and leave; apprentices, future production workers or unemployed, who simply reject vocational training; adult education which often manages to disillusion for

the second time those who remember bitterly their initial educational experience — these are only some examples of the failure of an education which provides no opportunity for creativity, research, production, nor individual or collective self-education. By contrast, courageous experiments have been and are taking place in formal and non-formal education to meet the new educational and cultural demands, and these experiments show that educational innovation and creativity are possible — in the cradle, the school, the university and in daily life.

The Transformation of the Labour Market

The crisis and transformation of the labour market through the progress and universal application of technology and at the same time an explosion of non-skilled work, which demands either very high or virtually no qualifications, are at the root of present and future changes in educational systems. But these changes are not automatic. Educational systems often endeavour to preserve educational patterns which no longer fulfil the functions asked of them, while social and cultural forces seek to reproduce educational and cultural activity.

The implications for educational policies and activities of the international division of labour are also obvious in the segmentation of the labour market, the spread of technology, the multinationalisation of financial and industrial capital, emigration at continental and inter-continental level, and the concentration of scientific and technological research in certain countries. In economies which are more and more interdependent; and bound by old and new international and social divisions of labour, progressive educational projects can only be plans for struggle in the concrete and often unfair conditions of life. Education can be granted or demanded. In each case the meaning and the quality of education will be different.

Education — an Instrument of Social Policy

Education must form a part of any society's plan of domination, liberation and construction. In history imperial plans have often been imposed by educational models. The idyllic mask of education tends to be blurred, but often a Manichean interpretation follows. It is indeed difficult to comprehend the dialectic dimension of education.⁸

Educational plans develop in a situation of contradiction between