

Jürgen Oelkers

The Future of the Public in Public Education *)

The topic of my discourse deals with the relationship between education and the public sphere, and also the role and responsibility of public intellectuals. This question has preoccupied me since my student days, more specifically, since my reading of Jürgen Habermas's book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (Der Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit)*, published in its German original in 1962.

At that time, the book was required reading for all University disciplines having to do with politics, education and society. I don't believe that this unifying force of great books still exists and if this is so it would be a great loss because it means that we also lost the authority of thinkers who are respected between the disciplines.

Anyway, I read the book ten years after it came out and, as an immodest doctoral student, also proceeded to comment on it. And it was printed! (Oelkers 1975) The topic has continued to concern me since then, reinforced by my Switzerland's thirty-year experience of viewing public education quite differently from the Germans. There is no equivalent of the German educational philosophy in Switzerland, and the state's influence on education is limited.

In Switzerland, I learned that "public education" can only be spoken of in relation to the *political public sphere* and that the public schools (Volksschulen) serve the people and not, for instance, the state or the parents. Public schools are understood as a *service publique*, which is organized by the Cantons that are also responsible for the quality of the service.

And the schools are controlled by local boards that are elected directly, i.e. in a way that in Germany is considered to be highly suspect. "Direct democracy" is burdened with the lessons of the Weimar Republic but these lessons seem to block every discussion on democracy and this all the more since right-wing "Alternative for Germany" favours direct voting of the people.

But I don't think that any leading AfD-member knows what makes Swiss democracy work and that all kind of radicalism is suspect because what counts are publicly accepted solutions and not mere slogans. Nevertheless the topic is delicate all there more as the "Brexit" voting seems to confirm a mismatch between education and the public sphere.

Back to Habermas – He does not immediately delve into the connection between education and the public sphere, but his thesis on the transformation from the reasoning public of the eighteenth century to the media-influenced public of the twentieth century suggests the question of whether the relationship between education and the public also underwent a change in structure and, if so, which developments were linked to that.

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At first glance, we would have to exclude that possibility. Numerous texts of the era of Enlightenment, from those of Joseph Priestley to Thomas Jefferson, speak of a “public education,” without which the social system of democracy could not exist. The beginnings of this conviction date back to the English Revolution; the theoretical expression, still valid today, is John Dewey’s book *Democracy and Education*, which came out in 1916 and is still a standard work.

In Western countries, a free, quality education for all was required in order to guarantee the ability of future citizens to participate in political affairs and voice their concerns in public. In this sense, public education served the public or, more specifically, the political public, and by this the living together in society.

Public political debate assumes a common language and demands as high as possible a basic education for all. At the same time, a certain culture or a specific heritage is not decisive - only the culture of the democratic public itself. “People” is thus not to be understood as an ethnicity, to avoid the term “völich”, but as an assembly of eligible voters, apart from race, gender, or ethnic heritage. This abstract form of the people is the great achievement of modern democracy. It is the passport that is necessary and not the ancestry.

The historical process of public schooling is largely the result of the postulates of the Enlightenment, even if the rationale was different. The Anglo-Saxon countries use the term “public education” because education is held to be for the “public good.” A similar situation exists in Switzerland, while in Germany the talk is of “*Volksbildung*” (“people’s education”) and the term “public” represents only an indirect reference point.

Regardless of the rationale, in the nineteenth century, the state monopoly of the school system emerged all over Europe and still exists intact today. The national states became responsible for the education of the people; that is, they issued school regulations, created their own administrations, drove off the private schools, and to a large extent took over the financing of the schools (Geiss 2014, Aubry 2015).

Often overlooked is the fact that in the historical development of the schools, the school monopoly took over the education market, while today the reverse is sometimes argued. In the middle of the nineteenth century, private schools dominated the field, and in the first part of twentieth century, the state school system still presupposed the necessity for tuition payment. In Germany, a school system that is completely free of charge has been in place for barely sixty years.

Historically, the “public sphere” has taken different forms.

- It can mean a place where the citizens of a community meet and exchange ideas.
- In addition, it can be a place for social occasions, general social life, and decent meetings in local public.
- In connection with that, it is a space for social supervision, public relationships,
- and finally, a journalistic vehicle for criticism and, increasingly, for opinion making through and with the mass media.

With the mass media of the twentieth century, the historical forms of the public sphere lost both their boundaries and their unique character. Media messages could reach anyone

regardless of place of origin, the only condition being literacy and not background or ancestry. Nevertheless, the ideal of personal communication and social exchange at close range was not abandoned but preserved.

Even John Dewey's thesis on democracy as a "form of life" is indebted to this historical public sphere. The two pillars of his theory are political engagement and social exchange, both of which are related to manageable spaces and personal presence as well as neighborly democracy as the essential purpose of politics (Rosenblum 2016). To quote Richard Rorty (1998, p. 25): Dewey's image of democracy was that of "a town meeting". And only German philosophers can mock at this.

As is well known, Jürgen Habermas made a similar case for communication in the "lifeworld," suggesting that it could not be replaced with system rationality. A democratic society is determined through social coexistence in everyday life; government administration is secondary and ideally has only an ancillary character. Living together in modern society is in turn regulated through public discussion and democratic decision making, not through independent and uncontrolled "leadership" (Führung).

An exchange in the public sphere presupposes observation and distance: there is always a face-to-face encounter and, with that, the "generalized other" - to use the term coined by George Herbert Mead - in an expectation of interaction. Those wishing to conduct themselves in public must adhere to rules and fulfill expectations—thus be capable of "behaving" themselves. This was why etiquette was an essential requirement of earlier education.

But we no longer find ourselves in the eighteenth century. "Etiquette" does not appear on the list of objectives of today's pedagogy, and public behavior has also undergone a change. This is visible in disappearing social control, in the dress code, in the urge towards individualization, and also in the rules for self-representation in the public arena. Finally, the political public sphere has changed as well, namely, from the communication of the elite to mass democracy.

One may therefore question how the changes of the public sphere will affect the public education of the future. Education should relate to the responsible citizen, who is educated enough to take part in public debates and vote responsibly. But what happens when he or she loses or simply no longer uses the classical medium of the political public sphere? Will he or she then lose citizenship? And what should be done when the great teachers go missing from this public sphere?

The public sphere is not only the medium for the exchange but also for the articulation of arguments. Since antiquity, the teacher has always played a role in this. Here the term "teacher" is not meant in the sense of the profession but in relation to teaching through theory, science, and criticism. Thus, intellectuals of the twentieth century, like John Dewey or Jürgen Habermas, were or are teachers in the public sphere, "public intellectuals" whose voice carried weight beyond their own camp.

They presuppose a particular public sphere, namely, that of the traditional media, or books, magazines, and newspapers representative of intellectual standards. This is not the public sphere of the tabloids and the market crier, but of theory-driven argument in which the purpose of all controversy is clarification and ultimately also of understanding. This assumes civil forms of debate that may not go unpunished if transgressed. Donald Trump's campaign,

for instance, is evidently not compatible with this. But do not twitter accounts determine our public life?

Habermas coined the term *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. In substance, the subject of “structural transformation” has already been discussed and written about earlier, most likely first by Walter Lippmann in his two books *Public Opinion* und *The Phantom Public*, from the years 1922 and 1925 respectively. Above all, Lippmann doubted the notion of non-hierarchical public communication (herrschaftsfreie Kommunikation), which in his eye would be naive especially in political terms.

Politics in particular is concerned with power and dominion. Politics utilizes partisan communication, strives for approbation, and makes use of emotional headlines. Lippmann therefore emphasized the stereotypical influence of the mass media and questioned the impact of democratic education. The reality of political debate always had to do with a give and take and not merely with recognition and understanding.

If we would follow Lippmann, then the political public sphere deals with the mobilization of voters through messages that they want to hear and that are radically abbreviated with respect to the real problems. Simple solutions are convincing, and the vote is won when the sense of right is satisfied in accordance with one’s own camp.

This ultimately presupposes the arbitrary manipulation of citizens, which is tantamount to the disenfranchisement of the sovereign, that is, the people, who can be neither fragmented into target groups nor pillarized if the demand for a considered and rational decision is to be maintained. In democracy, one has freedom of choice, which harmonizes with neither ignorance nor the restriction of free thought. But is our public education capable of supporting this?

The decline of the liberal education has been much discussed (Fuhrmann 2002), mostly in tandem with assumptions that presuppose an ideal past state of affairs. But in the past the education of the citizen was always exclusive and could only maintain its stability if the greater part of society remained excluded. Friedrich Nietzsche made this clear in his 1872 Basel lectures on the future of educational institutions: the democratization of education could only signify their downfall.

But all educational systems grow, and it is precisely because of that the growth of ignorance must be ruled out. Furthermore, “ignorance” cannot be the same as it was in the eighteenth century, after the successful establishment of literacy and the stabilization of school standards over generations. That does not mean, however, that political factions will lose their differences and that we are headed towards a post-political public sphere. On the contrary, in spite of growing educational standards, it is becoming increasingly easy to emotionalize politics.

What has been hardly noted until now is the question of how the public sphere in social media is influencing educational institutions. Now as then, they assume that the offerings of a general education relate to the future citizen. To repeat: Education along these lines is considered to be for the common good, which must be protected against privatization and the market.

Yet behavior in public spaces is becoming noticeably individualized, and privately used media are able to replace traditional schools. By international comparison, the financing

of higher education is becoming more and more of a private matter; public educational institutions are becoming subject to the pressures of efficiency; and graduate diplomas are losing their value through multiplication and the constantly demand for innovation.

On the Internet, political communication is often reduced to quick messages and the uncontrolled endorsement of prejudices. And the basic rule for behavior and thus habit of the users of new media allows a new formulation of the old Socrates cartoon: “To be is to be updated”.¹

- In view of such tendencies, questions arise as to whether the authority of public education is still sufficient, which public it is targeting, and what will replace it.
- Related to that is the question of how living together in society will develop in the future
- and, consequently, how social education will look if individualization determines the way of life and every public good can become a matter for endless debate.

Finally, we must also ask what will become of the great public teachers if their medial resonance space is shrinking and their influence thus receding. Public morality would then have no accepted voice that could or must be heard by all, regardless of whether they follow that voice.

Associated with this is the question of whom to invest with authority in a social democracy and whom to trust, politics aside. If we can only trust our own camp, then we will not be able to use argument to correct our attitudes, but only to reinforce them. A debate between democrats would then be pointless because they would only be able to talk at cross purposes or even worse exchange nothing more than hate messages.

It is precisely this impression that today’s political campaigns and media-driven public spheres inspire. Fast and shallow, they seek confirmation rather than reconciliation, only care about their own interests, and worst of all punish intelligence. Of course, any citizen can see through this, make his decisions through other means, or opt out of the political public sphere altogether. However, the purpose of public education is then no longer clear. It cannot serve to merely promote nausea in response to politics.

Democracy requires not only the ability to learn but education in the sense of abilities for understanding that cannot easily be achieved ad hoc. This is all the more true when everything can be made into a political topic. Here, sorting capabilities not provided by the Internet itself are necessary. Citizens must decide what is *not* to see as a political topic and also what must be taken seriously and what not.

The capacity to learn and understand does not mean that citizens are only accepted when they have mastered advanced cultural forms. As previously mentioned, access to the vote is effected by the passport and not by the highest educational graduation. Political existence as a citizen does nevertheless have educational requirements that are a basic aspect of adequate schooling for all.

¹ New York Review of Books Vol. LXIII, No. 11 (June 23 – July 13, 2016), p. 36. (See Hui Kyong Cin 2016).

Those wishing to participate in public life must master the rules of verbal and written communication. Otherwise, one can neither express oneself nor represent one's interests. Mutual understanding does not tolerate gross mistakes of language and communication very long; to not observe the standards is to fall short of regular expectations and only be able to count on tolerance as the exception.²

The new media have ensured that a structural change in the public sphere has taken place, one that is indeed more far-reaching and different from that described by Jürgen Habermas or, earlier, Walter Lippmann (Thierney 2013). The sphere of public and the conditions of forming the public opinion not only extend immensely but also change fundamentally. By this also expectations of quality in education changed and control outside schools more or less vanished. You can't control the grammar of blogging.

There are at least three indicators of this: the public sphere of the new media, the disappearing significance of grand theories, and the change in opinion leadership. All three indicators are interrelated with respect to the question of educational quality, if education means more than school and is linked to the political public sphere. This sphere once was the medium of the grand questions and thus also the grand theories.

The Internet has brought about the emergence of a "public sphere" without a personal presence in space and time and also without forgetting, a "public" that no longer refers to literature but to itself and also one which is pressed for time. Public life in the Internet has to do with an acceleration which is unparalleled in history (Wajcman 2015).

Also participation on the web presupposes anonymous opinion making and thus embarrasses the traditional notion of a public sphere involving personal discussion and responsibility for the opinion. In addition, there is no longer a specific authority that could determine the standards and monitor the level of debate.

Back in 1990, Quentin Skinner spoke of the "return of grand theory in the human sciences" in his anthology of the same title. Only grand theories and theorists could put faceless positivism and empiricism in their place, a task that would be assigned to philosophers like Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault or Jacques Derrida and others (Skinner 1990).³

But even great philosophies have their day, lose their influence, and then disappear or become marginalized. The decline of influence holds true for the human sciences as well as the interested public. And most philosophers will not become "classics" of their discipline that must be read during the studies.

Lastly "postmodern" philosophy had some influence in the media and also defined a greater part of the academic discussion, especially in its criticism of the "grand narratives," which is to say that the grand political theories of the past are no longer to be trusted. So it was also the song of farewell to grand theories.

Viewed in this way, also the medial influence of intellectuals appears to be coming to an end, at least as far as the grand theories are concerned. Fifty years ago Jean Paul-Sartre and

² "Remedial Work" (Goffman 1972, 138-149).

³ The anthology introduces various theoretical concepts in a preface by Skinner. Other approaches are that of Thomas Kuhn, John Rawls, Louis Althusser, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Fernand Braudel.

Herbert Marcuse were influential as public critics, but only because everybody interested knew that they were backed by grand theories—Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*) and the Marxist dialectical theory of society.

Today these theories are seminar topics, in Heidegger’s case, with the incrimination of his *Schwarze Hefte* (black notebooks). Here we can see how the author of a grand theory turned into a seer who wishes us the apocalypse only to reduce his “theory” into an anti-jewish world conspiracy. So Heidegger, the grand authority of 20th century philosophy, is not far away from the normal Internet loony.

Of course new philosophies will occur but however they wield their influence on human sciences in the future, their influence on the public sphere will never again that of the past. Today’s opinion leaders are experts and not philosophers, or at most philosophers *as* experts.

But experts for everything like philosopher David Precht in Germany are no “experts” at all. On the other hand who can be an expert provided an unmanageable multiplicity of topics, ever narrower target groups, and the short-lived nature of the expert status itself? But the shift is interesting.

Experts are no longer expected to provide radical critique and by this enlightenment, but only advice and the solution to problems. Of course, there is still social critique in all possible areas and of every shade, but the credibility of a utopia has been lost. No longer can the grand theories be viewed in such a way that they influence the course of history, all the less because “history” has many facets and tendencies that do not lead to a final state of affairs.

Those who are acting in the public sphere can no longer rely on grand theories, must guard against experts, and in the end can only depend on their own judgment without, to quote Kant, having to assume their own “Unmündigkeit” (immaturity). But then school education only can assure the quality of judgments, because schools are setting norms and can require following.

I will attempt to make a strong case for the following thesis: Quality schooling for everybody is not the victim of the Internet but a way to secure independence. Only a general school education can provide the basic standard for education and thus for public discussion. There is no substitute when schooling will not accomplish this task.

This is presumably also why the “deschooling of society” suggested by Austrian Jesuit Ivan Illich (1971) almost fifty years ago has not occurred, and that not only because of the difficulty of abolishing social systems that have become sluggish. It is no coincidence that the phrase “too big to fail” has never been seriously applied to the educational system.

In fact schools still are good inventions for the substantial and continual spreading of education that no society can do without them, even where Illich presumed limits of equity. The central problem of all developing and emerging nations is the formation of a qualitative, superior educational system; their societies could hardly be “deschooled.” “Deschooling society” has thus been nothing more than a slogan for academic radicalization.

If schools are indispensable, what then exactly does “education” mean? In German philosophy of education, the abstract “subject” is constantly being made a topic for

discussion, but not its life span and certainly not the various learning spaces associated with it. Yet in practice, education is *a lifelong process* (Bruner 1995) that does not take place in a linear manner, that is associated with winning and losing, and that requires adaptation to ever new learning situations that are also always linked to configurations in social space.

On the other hand, theories of schooling are more apt to assume a self-enriching “subject” that can be motivated and will learn for his own best in any situation. The somewhat inevitable psycho-jargon of today’s education coined the term “self-organized learning” which seems to unify both the advocates and opponents of the modern school.

Why this is not a good idea? First, it is only a new watchword for an ambition and second it says nothing about the truly important things in education. The purposes of learning are as much a question as the sustainability of what is learned; and it is here that democracy comes into play yet again, for how do education and democracy fit together if education relates solely to the subject?

A free subject can decide against democracy, even if doing so abolishes the political foundation of democracy. However, no subject acts solely on his own but must coordinate with others, and this raises the inevitable question of how living together should be organized politically. A central aspect of politics is the control of power and thus the checks and balances between the voters and those elected.

Democracy as a form of life is concerned with participation *in* and influence *on* public affairs, and this sheds a different light on *direct* democracy. It is not merely equivalent to the regular assembly of all citizens, which would naturally then quickly run into capacity limitations. Even Dewey’s “town meeting” has limits of space and time.

But the model of the ancient *polis* is not decisive and even misleading. With “direct democracy,” it is possible to identify not only assemblies but also referenda, direct forms of influence and opinion shaping as well as various types of political participation within civil society and outside the party system.

Those citizens who are only allowed to vote without also being able to decide on practical issues and to take responsibility for them can easily feel a sense of political powerlessness, and when citizens are not entrusted with the power of judgment because the issues are supposedly too complex, then democratic education rapidly loses its transactional basis.

Democracy must constantly prove its significance and benefits anew, but that will not work if the image of democracy is reduced to the representational form of the opinion poll. Opinion polls are about surveys, not participation. On the other hand, when democracy is understood as a form of life, then the government cannot simply enact the political education of the people but must relate and also engage with the people.

To put it in the language of today, the democratic habitus arises not least in civil society, with tasks and offices that citizens manage, that are entrusted to them so that they can tend to the concerns of the community. For this it is not necessary to have education in the sense of an academic degree but an education as a requirement for intelligent solutions to problems, democratically negotiated and generated at the grassroots level without underestimating the complexity of the problems (Bohman 2002).

The central reference point of education is thus democratic society which has to be understood, at least partly, in the Deweyan sense (Putnam/Putnam 1993). It is a question of educating future citizens who will take on duties in society and bear responsibility. In this sense, education cannot be reduced to career and usability, except that the two things cannot be played off against each other.

Families, schools, and universities also assume public functions that cannot be limited to private work education and professional performance. Without citizen involvement, a vital democracy would be impossible. And especially civic involvement requires education in relation to the topics as well as in terms of connections, which require personal effort to develop.

Thus, educational institutions perform not only degree-granting functions but also create an added value for the public sphere and society. For this, it is necessary to have the cumulative experience of different subjects and knowledge fields. Of course, professional experience is indispensable as well, again demonstrating that there is no normative difference between education and professional training.

In liberal democracy, education is understood as a public asset that the state defines by means of curricula. This ensures that previously achieved educational standards are not lost and can constantly be improved from one generation to the next. How successful this has been is more or less demonstrated in the literacy rate since the nineteenth century. A further indicator is the steady increase in university education.

To be differentiated from this are those ideas that relate education to common property that is cooperatively negotiated and designated. This common property is directed towards living together in the future, in a society that is becoming increasingly globalized. Indeed, only now can we speak of “the world” discussed in Humboldt’s educational theory.⁴

Living together in a pluralistic society becomes an educational problem that no longer follows tradition and makes at the same time high cognitive demands to which schools can also adapt (Print/Lange 2012). We can see this in new subjects like “Religion and Culture” in the Canton of Zurich, or “Life and Society” in the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg.

These two versions of education should not be played off against each other. Without the state’s regimentation of schools, there would be no guarantee of the educational contract between the generations; whereas living together in society, on the other hand, cannot and may not be predefined by the state. But state schools are called upon to contribute to this, for without knowledge, there can be no access to learning about other cultures or religions (Parker 2003).

Marginalization in one’s own country, with no opportunity for education, promotes radicalization,⁵ and no PISA test will change anything about that. Here priorities other than achievement tests are needed, and societal integration demands an understanding of education that does indeed use facts but also knows how to deal with heterogeneity and different rates of development. If no child is to be left behind, then the question arises where to draw the red line.

⁴ I owe these references to a lecture by Rita Casale on May 12, 2016, at the University of Zurich.

⁵ According to the study by Alain Bertho (2016) on France’s lost children.

In addition, we must assume different learning pathways while bearing in mind the autonomy of information-gathering methods. That which differentiates future public education from the schools of the nineteenth century arises from the fact that the state can now only exercise its educational monopoly within limits. Compulsory schooling is no longer equatable with a wide-ranging control of learning that can fall back on other media.

On the other hand, schools will continue to pursue the goals of public education and thereby have to maintain their focus on the development of democracy. There is no other institution that, as much as possible, ensures societal integration and thus can also deal with the results of migration.

In the nineteenth century, things were quite different because the homogenous social milieus supported the course of life. Today, the schools must deal with the conflicts of integration directly, and have to have in mind that no school career can be repeated. This alone makes the responsibility clear.

The fact that students, parents, and teacher today can communicate worldwide does not change this. This form of globalization has indeed led to a far-reaching change in learning behavior because we can *search* and *communicate* differently, without being dependent upon a social organization. But “googling” or “chatting” are fairly solitary activities, being linked to nothing more than searching.

The various tasks of public education do not thus pretend to be wholly new, even if the means and structures of providing an education may change. But then they also can become more transparent and democratic, controlled only through the exchange of information. On the other hand, there remains the question of a common education for everybody without prior preferential treatment or at least with an agenda that is fairly balanced towards the disadvantaged.

We cannot export democracy; it can only evolve by itself. It is no coincidence that in post-1945 Germany, no democracy arose that included strong plebiscitary elements according to the American ideal. Until today scepticism regarding direct democracy is widespread not only among intellectuals.

Democracies can and must continue to evolve, but not according to the ways of imperialism; it is not about a deposit of faith. Democracies are based on consent. That is, they must be convincing to the citizens, which is all the more successful the more participation is ensured.

Today, schools are exposed to competing educational media that are faster, easier, and better adapted to learning. One central question is what this change in media will signify and effect for public education. Conservative critics are already foretelling the downfall of reading culture, since media users look for quick facts that can be linked together on their own, without having to respect the demands of standards.

The state school monopoly has always controlled learning standards and was therefore dependent for its existence on evidence of progress in learning. “School” virtually meant progressing in an orderly fashion in specific subjects. When learning is solely determined by the available motivation in a given situation, then the control of the standard-setting authority is no longer applicable. It can only repeat this.

What does this mean for the educated citizen? The public schools must fulfill expectations of society that, from elementary to advanced education, are always tied to the demand for perfection. This is why there is a repeatedly heated debate over the inadequate mastery of the written language, basic arithmetic skills, and even verbal skills. Indeed, if such skills do not exist or are decreasing with every generation, then the question of the school's intergenerational contract needs to be posed anew.

School education serves for social integration through degrees and credentials, but in schools internal democracy is made difficult because of the power structure. Parents and students do not choose the teachers; nor do they decide on the curriculum or the length of school attendance. On the other hand, the forms of participation—for example, in the school law for the Canton of Zurich—are admittedly established in such a way that the balance of power is not threatened. Teachers are not merely the “partners” of students or parents, even if they describe themselves as such.

Democracy can also be understood from the viewpoint of rules of transparency and fairness. This is where public schooling has some catching up to do. Transparent marks or criteria for performance evaluation would be as much of a future purpose of school development as fair international comparisons and, consequently, a critical review of the PISA system, which has never been democratically decided.

The PISA test is a costly major project in educational science on behalf of educational policy or, more specifically, the generators of today's international educational policy, that is, the OECD in Paris, which had developed in the past pedagogical expert roles of their own and wields tremendous influence over them. It is like an EU problem: Nobody ever voted on it.

At the same time, a case is being made for an international educational competition that will barely take place in the schools and that obscures the real winner of this policy, namely, the international testing industry. In the United States, it has managed to make the achievement of scholastic standards largely dependent on itself, again without any democratic ruling (Ravitch 2010).

One other thing is foreseeable: in the media-driven society of the future, there will be a rising demand for reading and writing skills that do not develop *by themselves* through the use of media and also do not result from self-creations. Bloggers who write in their own style and jargon, confidently overlooking grammar in the process, handicap themselves as long as that is all they learn.

A general education cannot usually be acquired piecemeal and designed on the basis of personal concepts. Because no one else can provide a general education in a controlled form, the significance of the school in this regard is more likely to increase, which will also be true if the school system strongly upgrades itself in terms of media.

My final thought relates once again to public teachers, and I conclude in a rather German way, after having had little regard for such German idiosyncrasies as the fear of direct democracy or the return to the Weimar Republic. Democracy presupposes trust in the citizen's ability to judge and, at the same time, the acceptance of decisions that one has opposed.

But what are public teachers allowed to do? In the history of pedagogy, the teacher as “leader” is a topos that has been colored by religion and is already evident in the sermons of

the seventeenth century. With the growth of the elementary school since the end of the eighteenth century came the professional expectation that the teachers should “guide” students and thus achieve goals.

This topos took on a life of its own at the beginning of the twentieth century, being invested with expectations of salvation and detaching itself from the tight link between school and instruction. “Leaders” wanted to propagate teaching and secure followers for themselves. This explains why Max Weber (1994, 18ff.) issued a forceful warning on this topos and its use in pedagogy.

In his discourse *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (“Science as a Vocation”) (1917), Weber stated that the “teacher” must be sharply differentiated from the leader. Only a “leader” seeks a following, if possible, a blind one; in contrast, a teacher serves the education of his students. Thus, when a teacher wants to be a leader, he has missed his calling. Public intellectuals serve the public only when they are not leaders and this can also be done without seers with “black notebooks.”

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