

Educational Studies presents

Theory and Research in Education: The Case for Pragmatism

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EDST DEPARTMENT of
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Abstract

The recent proliferation of theory in social and behavioural research – through, for example, philosophy, cultural studies, critical race theory, feminism, postcolonial theory, science and technology studies, indigenous studies, and so on – raises important questions about the roles theory can and should play in empirical research in education. There are not only questions about which theory or theories one should use to inform such research, but also about what one expects or hopes theory to ‘do’ in research. And there is perhaps even the bigger question why one wishes to engage in research at all. In my presentations I will explore these questions from a pragmatist perspective. This does not mean that I will express a preference for pragmatism as a theory or a philosophical position, but rather that I will suggest that questions about theory in research should be approached in a pragmatic way, that is, always connected to the question ‘What is the problem?’ The three discussion partners in my exploration will be Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Rancière and John Dewey. In conversation with them I will try to build up a case for pragmatism.

Bio Note

Gert Biesta (www.gertbiesta.com) is currently Professor of Education at the School of Education, University of Stirling, UK. In January 2013 he will take up the Chair in Educational Theory and Policy at the University of Luxembourg. He has published widely on the theory and philosophy of education and educational research. Books include Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation (with Charles Bingham); and The Beautiful Risk of Education (for release in the spring of 2013).); Derrida, Deconstruction and the Politics of Pedagogy (2008; with Michael A. Peters); Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future (2006).

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