

Closing Speech by Philippe Meirieu

The closing session of the 2022 Biennial in Brussels

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1921-2022: From LIEN to Convergence(s):

A different context, the same determination...

Common values, increased lucidity.

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1921: Participants in the Calais Congress all believed, like Ellen Key, that the 20th century would be "the century of children", of their well-being and emancipation.

And in many areas, issues that were thought to be settled are reappearing, sometimes dramatically: the fight for peace, the rights of women and of minority populations, against fascism, etc.

- In 2021, 26,000 children died every day around the world from preventable deaths.
- More than 100 million children live on the streets.
- Over 180 million have no access to any form of schooling.
- And there are still hundreds of thousands of child soldiers, child slaves, child victims of violence, etc.

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Are we doomed to be eternal cloud catchers that will always evade us?

Or can we, without denying our founding values, act together, here and now, in the world we live in and in resonance with it?

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My approach this morning...

Our founding values

A world of uncertainty

Major challenges for Active Education today

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As early as 1921, "because the human being is a social being, educating him/her means teaching him/her to live in society".

In one century, the West has seen...

- The collapse of holistic societies and the emergence of social individualism: the first step towards democratic emancipation, now thwarted by the...
- The consumer frenzy and the rise of identity-based communitarianism of all kinds...

A major challenge today for the Education Nouvelle/Active Education

Cooperate to build something common... and to emancipate oneself from all the confines of identity.

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Since 1921, education has meant combining the right to be different with the right to be like others.

In one century, the following have appeared simultaneously:

- multiple differentialist claims that undermine the possibility of the 'common',
- the ravages of neo-colonialism and an unfortunate confusion between universalism and occidentalism...

A major challenge today for the Education Nouvelle/Active Education

Discovering what unites us and promoting what makes each of us special.

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As early as 1921, the "Copernican revolution" was promoted, which placed the child (the subject) at the centre of the system.

In the space of a century, the reference discipline (educational psychology, which is largely linked to philosophy) has given way to scientific approaches based exclusively on what is observable and quantifiable.

A major challenge today for the Education Nouvelle/ Active Education : to hear what the sciences are telling us without falling into scientism.

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As early as 1921, education is thought of as a risky relationship between human subjects.

In a century, we have seen the place of the human in the educational relationship called into question and we are now seeing the rise of the dream of an entirely virtual education, managed by algorithms and enlisted by neoliberalism.

A major challenge today for the Education Nouvelle/ Active Education

Seize technique as a pharmakon without being fascinated by 'technicist reason'.

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As early as 1921, the trust in the "ideal child" was questioned: "spontaneity is not freedom" (Korczak).

In one century, the place of the child in families has changed, the child has become the one who makes adults happy and the omnipotence of the child has been promoted by a market society at the service of globalized whim.

A major challenge today for the Education Nouvelle/Active Education. Bringing the Rights of the Child to life by deliberately assuming the "beautiful constraints", those that allow freedom to emerge.

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As early as 1921, the question of the relationship between desire and norms was raised... but the possibility of "emancipatory norms" was questioned

In a century, the question of educational standards has been renewed: traditional standards have largely been delegitimised but the arbitrariness of standards remains a major educational problem.

A major challenge today for Active Education/ Education Nouvelle : to reject standardisation, to develop the integration of normativity through joint activity... and to put standards up for debate.

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From 1921 onwards, education does not begin and end at school

In a century, we have learned that what happens in early childhood (the construction of a secure environment, the relationship with language, etc.) is essential, as is what happens in third places and the whole of social life.

A major challenge today for the Active Education/ Education Nouvelle
Do not abandon parenting education, rethink societal issues and invest massively in popular education

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As early as 1921, investing in education meant preparing for the future.

In the last century, and especially since 1950, we have learned that there will be no infinite growth in a finite world...

Yet we continue to demand that our children appropriate traditional school knowledge, but we are passing on to them a world damaged by our own selfishness and in which they no longer believe.

A major challenge today for the Education Nouvelle/Active Education
Enabling our children to give their future a future: sharing the inexhaustible rather than consuming the exhaustible

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As early as 1921, the militants of the Active Education/Education Nouvelle wanted to create "spaces of emancipation" and transform the public school.

Over the past century, public education services have been abused; they are now threatened by neoliberal marketisation in a world of growing inequality.
A major challenge today for the Education Nouvelle/Active Education
Rethinking the relationship between 'educational experimentation' and the democratic reconstruction of public service.

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As early as 1921, the militants of the Education Nouvelle/ Active Education claimed to be both pedagogues and politicians.

Over the past century, the gap between educationists and politicians, and between educationists and public opinion, has grown steadily.

A major challenge today for the Active Education/Education Nouvelle
Renewing the 'pedagogy/policy' link...
Continuously run the chain in both directions!

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Because "the opposite of education is barbarism, the failure to recognise the other as fully human" (Bernard Charlot)...

"There is only one education, it is global, it is for everyone and it is at all times". (Gisèle de Failly)

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And this education is the Education Nouvelle/Active Education, always faithful to its founding values, always capable of reinventing itself...