What "Makes Schooling": Democratisation doesn't mean deinstitutionalisation

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Abstract: *The recent Covid-19 pandemic has both revived and tested the ideologies of unschooling, or the deinstitutionalisation of school. It can clearly be seen that the weakening of the role of schooling has had the effect of exacerbating educational inequalities and appears to be particularly damaging to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, while those families most familiar with the school world have been found to be most able to support their children. These observations should prompt us to rethink the specificity of school as an institution and as a particular "form" or "grammar" and to reconsider the anthropological and structural links between school, literacy, and the specific work involved in studying, the type of knowledge that makes it necessary, and the risk of confusing, on the one hand, the essential democratisation of our education systems and criticism of their unequal and bureaucratic modes of operation and, on the other, their deinstitutionalisation, whether visible or hidden.*

Keywords: *school form, grammar of schooling, school as an institution, democratisation, school inequalities, literacy, studying*

The recent COVID-19 pandemic, which led to large-scale school closures and interruptions of schooling over periods of varying length in different countries, has simultaneously revived and challenged the ideologies of de-schooling and the deinstitutionalisation of school. The pandemic may even be said to have strengthened and accelerated the political logic of the decline of school as a public service guaranteeing the right to education for all in favour of a commercial conception of education, understood as the supply of educational goods provided in response to demand from families. Research on this topic has highlighted the negative effects of prolonged school closures as measured by the significant decline seen in levels of student learning and performance – a decline reported in the vast majority of countries that took part in the 2022 PISA survey (which was itself postponed by a year because of the pandemic). The extent of the decrease varies from country to country and was greater in France compared to the average across OECD countries in both literacy and mathematics, with the relative proportion of highest-performing students dropping by 4% between 2018 and 2022, compared to an 8% increase

in the proportion of lowest-performing students. The negative effects of school closures appear to have been greater among younger students, particularly those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. In other words, the weakening of the role of schooling appears to have had the effect of exacerbating the influence of social inequalities on educational inequalities and has been especially damaging to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.[1] By contrast, those families most familiar with the world of school appear to have been better able to support their children in assuming the responsibility placed on them for ensuring a degree of educational continuity, to the point of even standing in for school by putting in place often very intense homeschooling practices – thereby going against the grain of the ideologies of deschooling that the pandemic was thought to have revived. In short, the influence of schooling on families from all social backgrounds may be said to have increased, albeit in different and contrasting ways.

These observations underline the importance of rethinking the specificity of school as an institution and as a particular "form" or "grammar" and of reconsidering social and cultural transformations, the types of knowledge that make it necessary, its continuities and discontinuities, and its internal contradictions. They should also alert us to the danger of confusing, on the one hand, the essential democratisation of our education systems and the necessary and legitimate criticism of their unequal and bureaucratic modes of operation, and, on the other, their deinstitutionalisation, whether visible or hidden. I will do this by examining both the contributions and the limitations of the concepts of "school grammar" (Tyack & Tobin, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995) and "school form" (Vincent, 1980; Vincent, Lahire, & Thin, 1994). I will also supplement the largely sociological approaches taken by these authors with perspectives provided by historians, anthropologists, education researchers, and psychologists. These different perspectives will help us to understand the incontrovertible fact that any observer entering a classroom in a country whose language, culture, and history they are not familiar with will nevertheless know straight away that they are in a classroom – a fact that will become immediately apparent to them because of the room's spatial and material layout (see Lawn & Grosvenor, 2005), the immediately apparent features of the activities taking place in the room, and the asymmetrical relationships between the actors – i.e. the teachers and students – involved in these activities. This incontrovertible fact underlines the extent to which both school form and school grammar present both un-

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[1] On these observations and analyses, see Bartlett and Schugurensky (2020), Bonnéry and Douat (2020), and Hammerstein, König, Dreisömer, and Frey (2021).

changing characteristics (regardless of social formation or linguistic context) and synchronic variations across different cultures and different countries and diachronic variations within the same country or the same social and cultural formation. These configurations of variations and stability suggest that we need to consider both the unity (which is not the same as immutability) and the specificity of what "makes schooling" and the many different ways in which what makes schooling is constructed and realised in different periods and in different social and political contexts. They also require us to consider the different temporalities that combine in the relationship between stability and variation and between unity and plurality (Rockwell, 1999).

THE GRAMMAR OF SCHOOLING AND SCHOOL FORM: CONCEIVING SCHOOL AS AN INSTITUTION?

As the title of their 1994 paper indicates,[2] Tyack, Tobin, and Cuban introduced the idea of the grammar of schooling after reflecting on the reasons why most reforms have failed to radically transform established institutional forms of schooling in North America and on the conditions that would allow such reforms to produce more

substantive and longer-lasting impacts. The concept was designed to provide a better way of describing and understanding what remains stable in the organisation of schooling over and above superficial change, with reforms and innovations being rapidly assimilated by established practices in such a way that schooling changes reforms just as much (if not more so) as they change it. As the authors put it: "The basic "grammar" of schooling, like the shape of classrooms, has remained remarkably stable over the decades. By the "grammar" of schooling we mean the regular structures and rules that organize the work of instruction. Here, we have in mind, for example, standardized organizational practices in dividing time and space, classifying students and allocating them to classrooms, and splintering knowledge into "subjects".[3] This grammar is "the organizational framework that shapes the condition under which teachers instruct students". "Continuity in the grammar of instruction has frustrated generations of reformers who have sought to change this standardized organizational form. In this essay we ask why this grammar persisted and why challenges generally did not succeed" (Tyack & Tobin, 1994, 454–455). While it is undoubtedly a historical construct – a construct that is neither set in stone nor immutable – the con-

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[2] The paper (Tyack & Tobin, 1994) is reprinted in slightly modified form in Chapter 4 of the book co-authored by Tyack and Cuban the following year.
[3] In 1995, Tyack and Cuban added a further item to this list: "the way that schools award grades and 'credits' as evidence of learning" (p. 85).

cept of school grammar is, in their view, little modifiable in substance. This is largely because its different components are interdependent and constitute a structure, a configuration, or a system of relationships that is irreducible to its constituent parts and resistant to analysis into isolated components, but also because it seems self-evident and corresponds to a very widely shared belief in what a "real" school should be. The failure of the repeated attempts that have been made to transform this grammar is largely attributable to the fact that they remain too internal to the school world and its actors ("too intramural", to quote the authors) and that their promoters "did not cultivate the kind of broader social movement that might nourish educational and social change" (Tyack & Cuban, 1997, p. 108). These attempts are also generally too global and too top-down, requiring too much effort on the part of teachers. Instead, they should be designed to be not only implemented but appropriated and "hybridized according to local needs and knowledge" (ibid.). The changes that the cultural construction of schooling has already undergone and those that it will undoubtedly undergo in the future are therefore more a matter of tinkering around the edges than wholesale reform. Hence the title (*Tinkering Toward Utopia*) of Tyack and Cuban's work – a title designed to conceptualise and capture the slow pace and necessarily incremental nature of change in the organisation of schooling and educational practices.

The interdependent components of what Tyack, Tobin, and Cuban call the grammar of schooling are clearly components which, when brought together, make up what we call schooling. Moreover, while the authors specify that the grammar of schooling designates a set of structures and rules that organise and shape the work of instruction, they tell us nothing in either of their two publications about what the work of instruction specifically is or what makes it necessary. They even appear to suggest that the grammar of schooling is purely a matter of beliefs in what a "real school" should be, without ever considering that beyond these beliefs, there is something there that falls within the realm of what is necessary and the questions that this grammar seeks to answer. The notion of the grammar of schooling runs the risk of considering schooling more as an organisation than an institution – thereby remaining a purely descriptive notion that fails to account – or at least accounts inadequately – for the specificity of the institution.

Following Durkheim, the aim of the French sociologist Guy Vincent, who borrowed the term "school form" from existing work with a view to proposing a more systematic and more robust conceptualisation and use, is to ask what is "school in the literal sense of the term" (Durkheim, 1938; author's translation), or "school as it is" (Vincent, 1980; author's translation). As part of this aim, Vincent sets out

to examine and interrogate both its birth and gradual genesis and its evolutions. The latter are closely linked to other social and political evolutions and transformations of which school is the relay rather than the reflection. "Without claiming to embody both the profession of historian and the profession of sociologist, I therefore propose to describe precisely what the school form is – that is to say, the range and configuration of constituent elements of what we call schooling – and, based on the assumption that it is neither eternal nor universal, to examine when and how this form was constituted" (ibid., p. 10; author's translation). Borrowing extensively from the work of historians, especially *Education in France from the 16th to the 18th century* by Chartier, Compère, and Julia (1976), who showed how and the extent to which "the three centuries of the modern era are marked throughout the western world by the conquests of the school form at the expense of old modes of learning" (author's translation), Vincent systematizes the idea of school form by also drawing on Gestalt theories and the work of Merleau-Ponty. The concept of form thus seeks to develop not only a theory of society and its institutions but also a theory of socialisation and power.[4] The school form is therefore seen as the dominant form of the so-cialisation process in modern societies – a form capable of going well beyond the boundaries of school and of being operative and relevant in a number of socialising practices within families, at work, and even in leisure, artistic, and sports activities.

Not unlike the concept of the grammar of schooling, the concept of school form denotes a whole that is more than just the sum of its parts – in other words, a configuration or system of relationships that embodies the unity and continuity of the modern school beyond its many different manifestations, from Lasallian schools and the school of the French Third Republic to the institution in its present-day form. According to Vincent, these interdependent components include the following:

- a systematic specification and organisation of space and time separate and distinct from the time and space of family life or "ordinary" experience;
- simultaneous teaching procedures, resulting generally in practices that involve grouping together children who belong to the same age groups and have reached the same academic or developmental levels;
- an objectification and decontextualisation of knowledge and practices and their organisation in the form of programs, lessons, and exercises that are regulated, structured, incremental, and graduated, and

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[4] Vincent thus distinguishes himself explicitly from Durkheim, but also from the theories of Bourdieu, Foucault, and Althusser, all of which weighed heavily on the French intellectual landscape of the time. It is beyond the scope of this paper to develop this point.

• recognition and observance of supra-personal rules imposed on teachers and students alike.

This last feature – to which I will return in due course – is considered "that which makes the unity of the school form, its *principle of generation*, that is to say its principle of intelligibility", or that which "confers meaning on the various aspects of the form (including the specific space and time of the form)" (Vincent et al., 1994, p. 13; author's translation). Vincent is more attached to "the properly political dimension of schooling" (author's translation) and school form, conceived as a mode of socialisation and as a vehicle for power relations. However, Bernard Lahire, who was his doctoral student, focuses much more on the deep and structural links between school and written culture (literacy) and on the fact that the gradual construction and dissemination of the school form are inseparable from the transformation of social relations and forms of exercise of power, both political and religious, through the dissemination and generalisation of reading and writing practices and the relationship to language and the world that is inseparably linked to them.[5]

SCHOOL, LITERACY, AND THE WORK OF STUDYING: A DOUBLE READING OF SCHOOL FORM AND ORDER

Let us pause for a moment to consider the question of literacy – a question that goes beyond the field of reading and writing understood in the narrow sense. The anthropological perspective of Jack Goody converges with the psycho-cultural perspective adopted by Vygotsky to underline the specificity of literacy as a "technology of the intellect" (Goody, 1968/2006, 1977), as a system of semiotic mediation and a "psychological instrument" (Vygotski, 1934/1985). Though continuing Vygotsky's work and legacy, Eduardo Marti nevertheless emphasised the importance of not using the concept of a psychological instrument in a global and generalising sense by downplaying the profound differences that exist between the different systems of signs that constitute them. As Marti puts it: "One of the differences that seems fundamental to me is the difference between non-permanent sign systems organised temporally (such as indexical signs, symbolic actions, and language) and permanent sign systems organised spatially and

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[5] To do so, he draws on work in the anthropology of writing (particularly the work of Jack Goody) and research on the history of schooling and the development of literacy (including the work of Chartier et al. cited above) to demonstrate the importance, for the creation and generalisation of the "modern" school and the school form, of the rivalry between the two (Protestant and Catholic) reforms and the fact that this rivalry and the resulting competition are largely tied to the question of the reading of sacred texts in vernacular language by the faithful.

graphically (such as writing, drawings, numerical notations, maps, tables or graphs)." Therefore, these "permanent external systems of representation" enable an objectification and externalisation of memory and practice and therefore facilitate the linking of signs and information and reflective feedback on the work done (Marti, 2008). The acquisition of reading-writing requires language to be established not only as a tool of action that is generally ignored as such in its effective practice but as an object of re-description, analysis, and study, requiring and allowing linguistic facts (in their different dimensions, whether phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, or pragmatic) to become "conscious as such" (Vygotsky) and that their use can therefore be made explicit and voluntary. Likewise, external systems of representation – which include reading-writing and fall under a broader conception of literacy – must be the subject of a specific mode of transmission and learning, which comes under learning rather than apprenticeship (Moro, 2001). They are both objects of study and tools for study, for the development of the ability to think and reflect, as illustrated by the double meaning of the word *tableau* in French, which

denotes both a work and a mode of organisation and connection of data and information (double-entry table) and an essential material object for schooling – a graphic space dedicated to permanent external systems of representation and conceived as facilitating the joint focus of students and the teacher on the study of their characteristics and properties.[6]

The genesis or acquisition of written culture and its increasingly broad extension allow for the externalisation and accumulation of culture and knowledge hitherto preserved in incorporated practices. They operate at the level of social formations and individuals to construct a relationship to language, to the world, and to oneself that consists of a secondary symbolic mastery that serves to impose order and reason on something that would otherwise amount to pure habit and simple use. The objectified and formalised form of knowledge that is specific to written culture can no longer be the subject of learning operating through and in a practice that is shown and shared by simply doing it or seeing it done. This knowledge is not transmitted or acquired silently through simple impregnation or "fertilisation" in shared social activities. Its appropriation and mastery require

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[6]   The structural link between school and literacy is beautifully illustrated in the Iranian movie *Blackboards* (2000), directed by Samira Makhmalbaf. The movie depicts the minimal conditions required to provide schooling by telling the story of teachers who, following a bombing in Iraqi Kurdistan, are forced to retreat into the mountains, traveling from village to village in search of students, armed with just a blackboard carried by their mule. By involuntarily reviving past practices that predate the era of mass education, they are able to design schooling (or at least teaching) without walls or classrooms, albeit not without writing and external systems of representation.

systematic study – the conditions for which do not exist in the ordinary environment, meaning that they require the organisation of a space-time and activities specifically assigned to them in which the flow and the demands of our primary experience of the world can be "suspended". It is precisely this suspension that is captured by the Greek term *skholé*, the root of the word for school in many languages. The science didactician Samuel Johsua emphasised that certain human activities (which are becoming increasingly numerous in contemporary societies) cannot be mastered without undertaking a systematic process of study. Study has thus become inevitable, and the institution and the specific teaching work dedicated to it are increasingly essential. Yet school is not a social isolate that derives its legitimacy from itself outside of any inscription within a social formation or outside any reference to the knowledge and practices through which this formation is reproduced and transformed. It is therefore always necessary for the school as an institution to ensure that the legitimacy of its project, its goals, and the knowledge that it is responsible for transmitting is based on a reference, an external body or authority, whether scholarly, expert, religious, or political: "No academic knowledge can be its own reference. (…) This is in fact the whole problem of the school, considered here as an institution of study aid: it must always legitimise what study is the study of" (Johsua, 1998; author's translation).

We know that, in the birth of the school and the genesis of mass education in the West, the external authority that provided the foundation for the legitimacy of the earliest educational institutions and their content and their modes of transmission was religious in nature. In fact, this story is closely linked to the competition between the two reforms (Protestant and Catholic). Both of these exploited school and instruction, the learning of the basics (reading, writing, counting), especially reading, as a tool for conquering souls and moralising individuals and their behaviour. Therefore, "the school order that the seventeenth-century reformers invented has a function: to make the learning for which school is responsible more effective. (…) They operate on the basis of three registers: Christian training, mastery of the basics (reading, writing, counting), refinement of morals" (Chartier et al., 1976, p. 123; author's translation). These three registers were initially very closely linked, in the same way (notwithstanding differences in how things are done from one school, order, congregation, or context to another) that ecclesiastical and teaching roles often operate in unison. In seeking to produce lasting socialisation effects among students (and even indirectly, through them, within their families), the school institution is designed for populations "who must all together be Christianised, moralised, and acculturated" (ibid., p. 3; author's translation). These three objectives need to be seen

as having merged together rather than being juxtaposed, thereby significantly limiting the register of learning the basics, particularly because the learning of reading, writing, and counting was hierarchised and separated in time. The activity of the master thus amounts to both a profession (or at least the outline of a profession) and moral guidance. It was only gradually and under the effect of the different economic and cultural transformations of social formations that the three registers partly came into conflict with one another, with each undergoing specific developments that led to them parting ways – a process well summarised by Chartier et al. in describing small schools in towns and rural areas: "The evolution of practices from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century tells the story of the establishment of a form of discipline designed to subjugate bodies, morals, and souls. In place of the wild child (…) Humanism and the Reforms want to create a civilised, educated and Christian subject. The creation of a school order (…) is the preferred means of achieving such a transformation. (…) But ultimately, in a society in which learning the basics becomes essential and where the utilitarian principles of social organisation are divorced from any reference to a divine order, this collage contains within itself the seeds of its own undoing. The religious purpose is lost, but the formalities of school practice have shaped the educational relationship in a lasting way" (ibid., p. 145; author's translation).

With the increasing secularisation of both society and the political sphere, and with the considerable expansion of written culture throughout the different areas of social activity, the function of instruction – which quickly moves beyond just learning the basics – gradually came to take precedence over the religious function. However, this function of instruction does not become divorced from moralisation, but reconfigures its relationships with the latter, which increasingly becomes, with the construction of modern states, a matter for the political order, until school becomes "a state affair" – particularly in France, as illustrated by that particular form of schooling embodied by the school of the Third Republic (Chapoulie, 2010).

Given their inherent relationships with written culture, the specific work involved in studying, and the associated requirements of both, the school order, the school form, and their historical developments must, as Lahire (2008) argues, be the object of a double reading: "a *political reading* and a *cognitive reading*". The joint submission of both teacher and students to supra-personal rules and principles which for the most part do not depend on them must also be seen through a double lens. Teachers and students are subject to both political rules and principles (which are obviously not the same in a state school as they were in a church school, in republican ideology and the *Dictionary* edited by Ferdinand Buisson, or in religious dogma and the *Conduct of the Christian*

Schools by Jean-Baptiste de La Salle) and the rules and principles of the cognitive order. These cognitive rules and principles pertain to written culture and norms that are specific to the characteristics of the skills and knowledge that are taught, but also to the formalisation required to teach them and to contribute to students' intellectual and political and moral socialisation. Order, form, and academic content are not inherently legitimate but are instead governed by a double requirement of legitimation that is both political and moral and also epistemic and didactic. These two legitimation requirements are always in complex, potentially contradictory, and evolving relationships, as evidenced by the history of school disciplines (Chervel, 1988; Hébrard, 1988) and by the debates over reforms and changes in the content of teaching – debates that have tended to be particularly intense in France. Beyond that, they establish and entrench schooling as an institution and view the supra-personal nature of the rules governing it as relating not to people and the happiness and misfortunes of their relationships but rather to a pedagogic relationship, which, like kinship relationships, fundamentally defines positions and places in a system of

relationships that do not depend on people. These positions may be occupied by each individual person at different stages (a son or a daughter can become a father or a mother, just as a student can become a teacher, albeit in new relationships involving different people), and their occupation is underpinned, established, and guaranteed by an institution (i.e. civil status or school) and by an order of legitimacy that does not depend on the evolving character – whether love or falling out of love, recognition, indifference, or contempt – of interpersonal relationships, however much these changes may test and challenge it.[7]

Does softening or weakening the school form run the risk of deschooling

While Lahire insists on the necessarily double reading of school order and school form, the primary focus of Lahire's doctoral supervisor, Guy Vincent, was their political dimension. In his view, the function of transmitting knowledge is overdetermined by the function of the production of power effects.[8] Put differently, the principle of

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[7] The distinction between pedagogic *relation* and interpersonal *relationship* echoes to some extent the work of the French philosopher Paul Ricœur (1995 and 2001), who proposed a distinction between interpersonal alterity and institutional alterity and emphasised the fact that the latter pertains to the anonymity of a third party, "the recognition of common rules" allowing not just for the recognition of the close other (a friend) but also recognition of the remote other, the stranger or "anybody".

[8] I would add that these power effects are exclusively viewed from the perspective of the powers exerted *on* students and social subjects and never from the perspective of the powers *to* act and think that schooling may equip them with or that it may develop in them – with the emphasis placed on power *over*, making the power *to* secondary, not to say invisible.

efficiency is subordinated to the principle of order: "what does schooling do? It educates; that is to say, it subjects us to rules. To this extent, it is an aspect of power" (Vincent, 1980, p. 263; author's translation). Therefore, Vincent subsumed under this single function the three goals – to Christianise, to moralise, and to acculturate – distinguished by Chartier et al. (1976). However, Vincent (1980) is not then led to develop an immutable conception of the school form. He characterises the transformations or historical variations of this form, linked to the evolution of representations of childhood,[9] as falling successively under the model of the "tamed child",[10] the "reasonable child", and the "fulfilled child", or even "democratic socialisation". And he says that these models or "types of pedagogic relations (…) coexist in today's schools, where one or the other may predominate in different cases" (ibid., p. 233). As Vincent puts it: "While we may be able to speak of the school form when looking at the history of France from the seventeenth century to the present day, we should nonetheless distinguish several school forms, or, if we prefer, variants. (…) School, the reign of impersonal rule, is opposed to all forms of power based on the will or inspiration of a person. But the rule can either be imposed by a sort of taming (hence the importance of signals, postures, and gestures), or justified and internalised by appealing to "reason" and the feelings of the schoolchild, or finally established by discussion between equals (it is then, in the narrow sense of the term, a norm)" (ibid., p. 264; author's translation).

The greater importance given to political reading over cognitive reading even led Vincent to argue in a paper (to which I will return in due course) revisiting his previous work published almost thirty years earlier that "democratic socialisation, introduced into school in the broad and descriptive sense of an educational institution, destroys and must destroy the school form as a socio-historical form of transmission that is rigorously definable" (Vincent, 2008; see also Vincent, Courtebras, & Reuter, 2012; author's translation). Against the grain of Vincent's earliest work, this view turns its back on a contradictory dialectical reading of the concept of school form and the realities that it seeks to describe and examine. Thus, it reflects a very strong contemporary tendency "to amalgamate school form and formalism", to highlight and deplore only their most fixed, stable, and sclerotic dimensions and uses, and to use the pejorative sense of the term "to only synthesize the archaism of school, of its pedagogy or its "culture" – all of which (…) are assumed to have gradually become autonomous from contemporary

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[9]   On this topic, Vincent and Chartier et al. (1976) take a path already cleared by Philippe Ariès (1960).

[10]   The French word used by Vincent is "dressé", which means tamed in a similar way to how a dangerous or unpredictable animal could be.

social developments", and particularly the promotion of childhood and child agency, the adaptation of the school to the singularities of each student and each context (Joigneaux, 2008). From this moment on, the uses of the concept in France have tended to embrace the most reductive and most caricatured forms of debates about pedagogy and schooling that posit a simplistic opposition between two camps. On the one hand, we meet proponents of the supposedly obsolete, archaic, arbitrary, elitist, and socially unequal nature of school form or grammar, who argue that it is both necessary and urgent to renounce it, thus espousing, beyond the desire for "openness" in schooling, a logic of deinstitutionalisation or de-schooling. On the other, we meet proponents of a view that seeks to defend not the school form itself so much as its particular historical manifestation by and in the school of the French Third Republic, a position embodied by the authors of pamphlets published in the 1980s warring against so-called ped-agogism.[11] Moving beyond this simplistic and sclerotic opposition therefore requires reflection on the fact that school form today cannot be limited to or identified with the educational institution alone, extending increasingly beyond its boundaries, but also a reflection geared towards better identifying the risks involved in confusing the democratisation of schooling with its deinstitutionalisation.

At its core, the school form aims to build and bring to life a space-time devoted to the work of learning and studying and to ensure the conditions required for such work to take place – a type of work largely based on written culture and the use of external semiotic systems of representation that aims to construct a secondary relationship to the world, to language, and to the self. However, it is clear that a number of traits and dispositions that are specific to this form and this work now tend increasingly to inform not only a wide range of extracurricular activities but also the socialising practices that middle- and upper-class families, and even the most educated sections of the working classes, implement with their children. In addition to early initiation into knowledge and practices long considered specific to school (from using pens and pencils to shared reading practices, including learning the alphabet or grapheme-phoneme correspondence), what these families do is to work, prior to and alongside schooling, to develop their children into students by equipping them with that secondary relationship to the world and to language (or at least the beginnings of that relationship) and the necessary dispositions required to undertake the work of studying.

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[11] The most prominent of these authors in France, though he never used the term 'school form', is probably Jean-Claude Milner (1983).

These expansions of the school form and practices outside school[12] can have the effect of leading teachers or school professionals to consider that they no longer have to do this work themselves or much less so.[13] In fact, what we see is that the school institution and its agents tend increasingly to presuppose and even to demand that the children they teach are already largely constructed as students and equipped, before or outside school, with the specific dispositions associated with and required by schooling. This assumption stems from ignorance, or at least from a tendency to underplay the social conditions and practices that enable the construction of these dispositions, which all too often leads to viewing children who are not yet (or not sufficiently) developed as students as being deficient or even "unteachable" and to reducing the intellectual autonomy required of them to a kind of behavioural conformity and the performance of tasks that involve no real learning challenges. This can also go hand in hand with teaching practices that claim to be "innovative" and methods of making the school form more flexible that overlook the fact that not all students have acquired outside school the dispositions required to engage in the work of studying (or have acquired them unevenly) – with the implication of this being that there must be an explicit process to develop these dispositions in those who do not yet have them. In minimising or circumventing the specificity of the work of study, such practices run the risk of contributing to what Bernstein (2000) calls "invisible pedagogies" – in other words, pedagogies that tend to reinforce the implicit character of the modes of operation of the educational institution and that turn out to be just as unequal and exclusionary as the practices or variants of the so-called "traditional" school form from which they aim to depart.

For reasons of space, I will only give one example of these implicit modes of operation by drawing on the work of Élisabeth Bautier on language exchanges in ordinary classrooms. Bautier's work combines Bernstein's analysis of the relationships between the linguistic and cognitive registers with an analysis of conceptions of school democracy that lead to viewing the class and the groups that form within it as having to chiefly allow each student to find their place, to speak and express themselves in a convivial atmosphere conducive to participatory exchange, and with the

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[12] David Karen (2018) addresses the link between the expansion of the school form and the increase of inequalities, but his point of view differs radically from that developed here, and is practically not interested in what the cognitive component of the school form is. The term *school form* used by Karen has nothing to do with the work of Vincent discussed here.

[13] From this perspective, we may wonder whether what some authors conceive as the erasure or decline of the school form or the institutional curriculum of the school institution (see Dubet, 2002) should not be thought of instead as the success of the curriculum – a curriculum whose power today is increasingly felt well beyond the boundaries of the school gates.

analysis of social-constructivist vulgates that emphasise the activities that students engage in without always problematising and interrogating the nature of these activities and their relevance to learning objectives. Bautier examines how these models and doxas contribute to reconfiguring language exchanges in the classroom, particularly in preschools and elementary schools with a largely and even predominantly working-class intake. Bautier observes what she calls "chatty" classes in which the discourse that circulates between students, or even between students and the teacher, is not, or is largely not, subject to the specific work that would allow for learning and reflection, where:

- "erroneous interventions (…) or irrelevant interventions in terms of the cognitive objective of the given situation are rarely the object of a reappraisal, evaluation, or request for correction or justification";[14]
- "the use of deictics therefore replaces formal language and removes the need to resort to the words of knowledge";
- "classroom exchanges [are] increasingly conducted in the language of daily, non-educational interactions", and
- both the asymmetry of the statutory and enunciative positions of teachers and students and the reference to learning content and objectives (in-

structional or vertical discourse, according to Bernstein) are weakened or even disappear in favour of the horizontal discourse specific to ordinary communication between people.

Therefore, in this type of class, "control is equated with regulative discourse – in other words, with a form of management of pupils' work that is relational rather than cognitive". Accordingly, the misunderstanding is not, or not only, between students from working-class backgrounds and the situations and expectations that schooling confronts them with, but instead lies at the very heart of developments in pedagogic discourse and of the situations and expectations that students are confronted with, even if classroom discourse is never homogeneous: "current educational practices still rest on the elaborated code, whether it be the expected realization of texts of knowledge (texts articulated in the logic of written culture) or the cognitive dispositions and meanings which it helps to implement. However, the pedagogic discourses and exchanges which tend to frame work situations, classify knowledge and accompany tasks and ways of organizing work pertain to the restricted code and to the local meanings which it constructs, i.e. the everyday nature of the exchanges of connivance or Horizontal

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[14] As a telling example of this, and illustrating the perspicacity that pupils can sometimes show, consider the following conversation reported by the head teacher of a preschool located in a working-class neighbourhood of Paris between her and a five-year-old pupil: "You know, S. (the teacher's first name) doesn't like Mamadou (another pupil from a family of sub-Saharan African immigrants). – Why are you telling me this? – Because when he gets something wrong, she never tells him."

Discourse such as it is defined by Bernstein."[15] This tendency can only serve to deceive those students least capable of deciphering the implicit expectations of school and thereby increase inequalities (Bautier, 2011).

This approach does not dissociate the analysis of developments and adaptations of the school form and educational practices from the question of their variable effects (which can potentially generate social inequalities), depending on the classes and social environments to which students belong. Vincent takes an altogether different view in the text cited above, where he returns to the notion of school form and redefines it in narrower terms than he had previously used to argue that school form cannot "meet the requirements of democratic socialisation". To make this case, Vincent opposes the idea of school as defined by the concept of school form to the notion of a school "in which students speak and must speak, 'have the floor', discuss and debate to find reasons and justifications, make use of their reason and think for themselves". Vincent draws on the example of a sequence of work – called discussion and deliberation – relating to astronomy in

an elementary school class (year four). However, when reading his text and his commentary on the sequence, we are surprised to find that there is almost no analysis of the language practices employed by the students taking part in the discussion (not to mention that some of the students did not take part in it) and his analysis does no more than cite a small number of expressions (*because*, *therefore*, *OK*, etc.) in isolation from the context that precedes or follows them, as part of an approach that is more lexicographic in nature than intent on examining the cognitive-linguistic dimension of the exchanges. In taking this approach, Vincent is therefore unable to account for what is being developed and elaborated by the students or for the relevance of their remarks and their discursive sequence in relation to the object of reflection and the learning content concerned, and indeed does not appear to want to do any of this (Vincent, 2008).

Beyond the two authors cited and these two modes of analysis, which are both descriptive and normative, it is clear to see that we run the risk of reducing the school form to a purely formalist or sclerotic dimension by making it the

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[15] It is worth recalling that, for Bernstein (2000), the meanings and strategies that pertain to horizontal discourse and "ordinary" or "profane" knowledge "are local, organized in a segmented manner, specific to the context and dependent on it in order to maximize encounters between people and habitats", while those that are specific to vertical discourse and "scholarly" or "esoteric" knowledge are divorced from such encounters and contexts to instead make connections between them with a view to building a specific order that is not conceivable in relation to any one context and is therefore liable to be "the site of alternative possibilities and realisations". Other than the Durkheimian connection, this definition has echoes of the categorial distinction made by Vygotsky (1934/1985) between everyday and scientific concepts.

primary target of any aspiration or any policy to reform and transform the educational institution. This risk is not just about overlooking the question of social inequalities in academic learning and careers. It is also about overlooking the specificity of school. From this point of view, school can and even should be thought of as being a body (rather than an institution) of socialisation among others, whose reliance on instruction – that is to say the transmission of specific knowledge and practices – can and even should be seen as playing a weaker role than the competing bodies of socialisation and the regimes of truth and modes of experience that are associated with them.[16] Being alert to the danger of deschooling, or even to the deinstitutionalisation of school, should therefore encourage us to consider that "what makes the school form unified, its *principle of generation*, that is to say, of intelligibility", the principle that "confers meaning and substance on the various aspects of the form (including a specific space and time)" (Vincent et al., 1994; author's translation), the principle that must be preserved is above all a matter of written culture, of the work of study, and the development of the power to act and think that the appropriation of knowledge and skills specific to literacy enables. It is this dimension that pertains to the function of transmission and the vertical dimension of pedagogic discourse and that gives meaning and coherence to other dimensions such as the submission of teachers and students to impersonal rules and the ways in which students are grouped together. These are the institutional, epistemic, and political dimensions that, for better and sometimes for worse, operate at the heart of processes of emancipation but also of relations of domination to determine the impersonal nature of the rules which govern teachers and students who do not have the power to decide, as individuals, what should be taught or to determine the epistemic, didactic, and social relevance of the modes of definition, framing and classification, and transmission of school culture. Likewise, the methods used to group students in a context of mass education, which generally leads to simultaneous teaching methods, are not simply a matter of considering biological age. They are also a corollary, as Chartier et al. (1976) note in discussing the creation of the "modern" school, of the need to ensure "that children *with the same capabilities* are grouped by "classes" or "bands" and that they have the same book" (Chartier et al., 1976, p. 129; author's emphasis and translation) – or of what characterises students and their development and their learning relative to the requirements that are specific to what they are being taught. Hence the regulated and incremental nature of the curricula, lessons, and exercises designed for them.

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[16] This view is explicit in Charlier and Croché (2021).

SCHOOLING BETWEEN NECESSITY AND PLURAL TEMPORALITIES: DON'T THROW THE BABY OUT WITH THE BATHWATER

None of this should be taken as meaning that, whether in or outside the classroom, orality and literacy, horizontal and vertical discourse, ordinary and scientific concepts, everyday and studying experience develop in parallel or even compete with each other; nor should it be taken as meaning that the latter disqualify the former. Far from being relationships of disqualification or cancellation, their relationships are, or at least should be, relationships of elaboration, mediation, and reciprocal development capable of allowing for the development of the powers to act and think, to ensure that thought starts from action before returning back to it to increase its effectiveness and its scope.[17] Neither does any of this mean that the school institution and its agents should be indifferent to the people, children, and teenagers who are the students, to their history, to their environments and forms of life and experience,[18] or to the fact that the pedagogical relation – which defines positions in a system of relationships that do not depend on people – must, to be effective, be embodied, at least provisionally, by people and in interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, this means that it is necessary not to identify the student with the child or teenager to ensure that students continue to be challenged to learn and appropriate knowledge and social and cultural practices that differ from and are altogether more complex than the practices that hold sway within the student's family, social group, and everyday experience – in other words, the need and potential to go beyond one's limits and emancipate oneself. Neither does it mean that the grouping of students by age or "equal capability" classes and the mode of simultaneous teaching that this facilitates are immutable across time and space, nor that all students in the same class or group are expected to act and progress at the same pace. There is long-standing evidence of this, both in France and elsewhere, in the form of the experience of "single classes" that include students of different ages and levels while allowing for the regulated development and progression of teaching and learning (which can also benefit from interactions between more or less "advanced" students), or even the more relaxed and flexible forms of simultaneous teaching methods that are increasingly being made possible today by the growing diversification of task support tools (particularly digital tools) that allow teachers, including at preschool level, to delegate an increasingly significant proportion of the organisation and

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[17] On this point, see Rochex, 2011.
[18] Teachers are obviously also people – people whose characteristics influence how they carry out their job and perform their role and function.

regulation of classroom activities to students (Joigneaux, 2009).

I wish to argue here in favour of the idea that what makes schooling arises from the need (a need that has become more pressing today than ever before) to constitute, delimit, and bring to life a specific space-time devoted to the work of studying and the conditions required for such work, understood as a form of work largely based on written culture and the use of external semiotic systems of representation, and that this dimension is therefore the central principle underpinning the necessity and intelligibility of the institution and the school form. Then it follows that the other dimensions will be seen as more contingent and more liable to variations and diachronic and synchronic evolutions, both within the same social formation and from one social formation to another. The study of these various components has much to gain from taking a holistic but non-homogenising approach to the concept of school form, because such an approach is a more effective means of studying the evolving relationships that arise from plural necessities and temporalities, as the historian and anthropologist of education Elsie Rockwell has noted. Rockwell's work underlines the importance of differentiating, in the history of education, that which pertains to the long term, in which is constituted the hard core, the principle of the necessity and intelligibility of the school form, linked to their anthropological connection with

literacy and which makes it possible to identify "what makes schooling" from one period or context to another, from what relates to two other, shorter-term and more contingent types of temporalities: on the one hand, the relative historical continuity (a concept borrowed from Agnès Heller, 1977) specific to institutional transformations and political processes, and, on the other, the co-construction process that is specific to everyday practices and interactions: "All three dimensions are needed to re-examine the question of the cognitive consequences of schooling, for child development, as well as for the history of humanity" (Rockwell, 1999, p. 113).

By insisting on the need to preserve the structural core of the long-term school form and make it operate in the best way possible for all students, I do not, of course, want to deny or minimize the fact that this structural core has been able to bring together and aggregate many other traits and thereby give rise in different socio-historical contexts to particular modes of realisation that are also characterised by cultural arbitrariness, relations of domination, authoritarianism, aspirations to standardisation, and indifference to subjectivities, to the diversity of people and their relationships. These particular modes of realisation relate essentially to shorter temporalities that are historical rather than anthropological, but also to processes of co-construction at work in the everyday and ordinary lives of classrooms and schools. Neither am I seeking to minimise the need to re-examine the

current structures and modes of operation of the school institution and its different segments and establishments and to radically transform them in response to both social and cultural developments in our societies and to the goals of raising educational standards for new generations, of social justice and of the fight against segregation and educational inequalities. However, it seems to me that this necessity should be treated with tact and circumspection, both conceptually and politically. There is a grave danger and indeed a temptation in the present time to want to throw the baby out with the bathwater – in other words, to make the school form, rather than its most ossified and arbitrary historical and current dimensions, the main target and adversary of any endeavour or policy to transform the school institution and further promote the democratisation of access to knowledge and its critical exercise. The weapons of criticism would thus be turned against the democratic project, weakening or even undermining the political goal of transmitting a common culture and moving toward processes conducive to the deinstitutionalisation of school, or even logics of deschooling, thereby deepening inequalities between those children and teenagers for whom social and family experience can transmit and build the resources and dispositions that favour a capacity for study and those for whom this is not the case and who would therefore be increasingly condemned to being just "students by default". Conversely, the concern of not moving in the direction of deschooling the school form has nothing to gain by relying essentially on the particular modes of realisation that contemporary education knows, but instead has everything to gain from constantly questioning the relevance of the learning that it encourages, given the social experience of students, families, and social classes, without, however, either restricting learning to that immediate and familiar experience or seeking to dissolve it.

The questions that I have raised above about certain modes of criticism and weakening of the school form echo those raised by Elsie Rockwell more than twenty years ago in a study in which she re-examined the legacy of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich and the criticism of, and informal alternatives to, the institution and the school form (Rockwell, 1997). Rockwell reflects critically on the evolution of research and debates on education in Latin America. She shows how, during the 1980s and 1990s, "progressive educators" in the region, responding to the take-up by neo-liberal policies of specific criticisms of the functioning of the common school, sought to critically re-evaluate both the legacy of Freire and Illich and the dangers of carelessly applying theories of Reproduction or Resistance to the contexts of Latin America in favour of a reassessment of the role (whether real or potential) of public education: "Over the past two decades (…), a shift has taken place among progressive educators in Latin America towards revaluing public schools and

reclaiming them for popular education. (…) Their attention has turned increasingly to strengthening and improving public schools rather than to promoting non-formal alternatives." "Some scholars concluded that public education in Latin America, as unequal and inadequate as it had been, had contributed more to producing a 'critical rationality' than an 'instrumental rationality'." There is no optimism or irenic view of the situation in the countries considered by Rockwell, who makes it clear that much remains to be done in order for these "processes of appropriation of knowledge which are meaningful to dominated classes" to become a reality in public schools – a reality that she and other progressive educators are keen to advocate. Hence the need to rethink not only the relationships between the state, schooling, and democracy but also the question of what happens in schools, and therefore to pay much more attention to pedagogical questions, "including discussion of the ways of teaching and learning conventional school contents, which the sociological study of schooling during the late 1970s had "subsumed under categories such as ideology or symbolic violence" (Tedesco, 1987)" (Rockwell, 1997). It seems to me that these reflections provide a particularly fruitful basis for arguing that the debate, both political and scientific, between the logics of deschooling and the logics of school transformation also concern the very modes of functioning of the school institution and the ways in which we seek to evolve them – hence the questions that I have sought to ask about the school form and its critics. They also provide a fruitful basis for positing that, from this perspective, political questions and controversies are also pedagogical questions and controversies, and vice versa.

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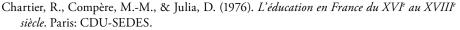
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ROCHEX, J.-Y. Co dělá školu školou: demokratizace neznamená deinstitucionalizaci

Nedávná pandemie Covid-19 oživila a zároveň prověřila ideologii unschoolingu neboli deinstitucionalizace školy. Je jasně vidět, že oslabení role školy mělo za následek prohloubení nerovností ve vzdělávání. Zdá se, že škodí zejména žákům ze znevýhodněného prostředí, zatímco rodiny, které jsou se světem školy obeznámeny lépe, se ukázaly jako nejschopnější podporovat své děti. Tato zjištění by nás měla přimět k tomu, abychom se znovu zamysleli nad specifičností školy jako instituce a její „formy" či „gramatiky". Znovu bychom proto měli zvážit antropologické a strukturální vazby mezi školou, gramotnostmi a podobou specificky školní učební „práce" a typem znalostí, které ji činí nezbytnou. V této souvislosti musíme zvážit riziko záměny na jedné straně zásadní demokratizace našich vzdělávacích systémů a kritiky jejich nerovných a byrokratických způsobů fungování vedoucí na straně druhé k jejich deinstitucionalizaci, ať už viditelné, nebo skryté.

Klíčová slova: školní forma (socializace), gramatika školní socializace, škola jako instituce, demokratizace, nerovnosti ve škole, gramotnost, učební práce