



Lycée Ermesinde
Lycée public autonome à plein temps

Mémoire Individuel

THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL

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I hereby confirm that the at hand memoire was written by me only, without unauthorized external help.

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Over the last few decades, schools have been criticized a great deal, yet nobody seems to agree on how to fix them. In this paper, I will explore what is truly wrong with our current school system, how it came to be, how we might fix it by redefining schools' purpose and what that purpose should be.

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1. A word on words:

Throughout this paper I most definitely will be using a variety of words that to some might appear synonymous to each other, I however, might have used purposefully to underline a nuance. In this small chapter, you will find a couple of these words of which's use I might want to explain myself.

For this paper, the most important differentiation to make is that of *function* and *aim*. In asking myself about the purpose of school, I am differentiating between those two as they are, as I believe that the *aim* of something is whatever its creators were planning to achieve, whereas the function of that same thing, is whatever it is actually achieving. In the context of the purpose of school, this differentiation is important to make, as very often, something that is conceptualized to work a certain way for a specific purpose, might in practice not achieve its aim but rather function as something different. This is a differentiation that I have created for myself to better be able to share my thoughts with the reader.

A further differentiation to make is that between *school* and *education*. School, as we know is an institution in which we are supposed to receive an education, an education can however also be received outside of school. The learning that is happening in schools is therefore also often called "formal education" where "non-formal education" is used to describe the education that is received outside of such institutions. The so-called "education system" will for the most part also refer to the education that is happening within schools, as there are no to very little actual "systems" of education that do not rely on schools as institutions. A "school system" is also usually represented by a board of executives who represents and is responsible for the given "system".

2. Introduction: What's the purpose of school?

Not always having been the very best performing student, I have started questioning schools from very early on. I, however, do not think that I've been the very first person to do so, to question why we do go to school. In fact, I am confident in presuming that every student in the traditional school system has asked themselves that question at least once in their life. It seems a pretty mundane question to ask, doesn't it? It is in turn probably also a question that every parent or teacher has at least had to answer once or twice. Chances are, however, that the answer varies a lot from person to person. "So that you can get yourself a proper job later", "So you that don't end up stupid", "So that you'll become a well-rounded person" and my personal favourite "Well, you have to don't you, what else are you going to do?" School has become something so self-evident and essential to our society, yet nobody seems to truly agree why it really is there.

We can probably all agree that there are multiple aspects that speak in favour of schools if they were ever questioned. It teaches us basic reading, writing and mathematics to survive in the modern world, it teaches us basic biology and physics and chemistry to understand how the world works, and it teaches us the humanities so that we can know where in the world we come from and what that means. Then it also teaches us basic social skill, discipline and time management, which are all skills that most will agree important and useful to have. Yet nobody seems to question just *how* we teach those things, *why* precisely these things are taught, if there isn't a better way to teach them and most important of all, *what the purpose of it all is?* What is it that we want to achieve with it? What is the aim we take by continuously creating schools as we know them?

We all have experienced the function of school first hand; it has given us an introduction to basic math, science and the humanities, has taught us how to deal with stress, or how not to deal with it, it has taught us to blame our teachers for what we don't understand, and to suppress our interests and focus on what is essential. It has taught us how to read and write, as well as the value of ambition and hard work. It has prepared us for a job in which we'll be sitting at a desk for an unhealthy number of hours, by taking our childhoods away and making us sit at a desk for an unhealthy number of hours. It has taught us to depend on authority and that success only comes from the approval of others as well as how to get said approval and basic manners and customs of the social world.

School as we know it teaches us plenty of skills that are useful and important in later life, but also is the source of deeply ingrained self-destructive behaviour, for a considerable amount of

people. The creation of these sources, however, is not intentional. School has not been created to have all these negative side-effects on people¹, but it has also not been created to have the many positive side-effects that it shows today. The problem is, school has not been created at all. School is the way it is, because it has evolved to the way it is. Over its years of existence, it has gone through adaptation and amelioration, but never really through revolution, not of late at least. With the ongoing progress in technology, medicine and engineering, as well as the constant change of the global political climate, our society has been going through a lot of development. And yet, while the world around it has drastically changed, school has barely made the effort.

While at this point in time, what we learn in school is still somewhat relevant to what is happening around us, with the world's constant, and increasing development, sooner or later, contemporary schools will have to reform to adapt themselves. Not to mention that over the years, the very effectiveness of school has been questioned heavily as well. If ever, school would want to adapt itself successfully or undergo any future restructuration, it will have to rethink its entire purpose.

In this new society, where knowledge is only a *Google* search away, we cannot help but criticise a system that tries to teach us that same knowledge as if it were a rarity. Our schools work in a system that is made to fit a society all the more different to ours, yet we do not notice, as we have just always taken it for granted. Before we can really analyse what, a newly restructured school should look like these days, we must ask ourselves the question of what it is we want to achieve with that school. What is the purpose of it?

My plan for this assignment is to first look at where it is the current Luxembourgish school system has been created and why, analyse its evolution and study the recent effects (or functions) it currently has on our society. Aiming to find my own conclusion on what it is school is supposed to aim for I am looking at the conclusion of three famous educational thinkers throughout history. Before venturing into this assignment however I'd like to state that a lot of statements made in this paper are hugely utopic, as I have based this research on principles of philosophy, rather than sociology of pedagogy, which focuses mainly on reflection and experimentation and allows to think of the question without the restraints of outward environmental factors.

¹ There is an entire community of conspiracy theorists that claim the education system to be rigged by politicians, made to create complacent, non-critical, clean cut citizens to keep us from questioning their actions. These are however only theories, whose legitimacy is not proven in any way or form.

3. Historical societal comparison:

3.1. Historical context:

We start talking about the beginning of school, as we know it today, close to the end of the industrial revolution. There, of course, were schools and other forms of education before, but never formalized or generalized. To elaborate on the argument that the current school system is not specifically targeting the contemporary society, I'd like to further inquire into the shift in society and school in this period in time.

Before the beginning of the industrial revolution over 70% of Luxembourg's population lived in the countryside as farmers or craftsmen, living and working as families. The education of children was therefore limited to the teaching of the family's craft, keeping up the household and, if lucky, reading and writing. Children were taught by their family, usually not in a traditional formal setting but by simply helping around and figuring things out on the go. With time governments started taxing the possession of land and many farmers were forced to move to the cities and find alternative employment. With invention of the steam-engine, and therefore many other technological breakthroughs, many new factories were built offering up space for these unqualified workers². Often children were forced to work as well as the families needed all the money, they were able to get, as the factory work paid poorly. Company owners were happy to employ children, as they were cheaper and able to do work that grown adults were physically not able to do, they were more malleable and were often sent to work in mines. School was consequently never really an option for kids.

Only privileged children, those of the company owners and the old bourgeoisie were able to go to school. These schools consisted of either privatized lessons by local intellectuals (often acquainted to the parents) or as religious institutions, primarily intended to teach kids in the Christian faith but also taught other subjects that were seen as prestigious such as history, art, music, dead and living languages, mathematics, biology and music. These children profited from another privilege that the children of the lower classes would not, they were given the privilege of childhood. In the industrial ages, there was no time for people to really care for their children as the little time that people would not be working was spent sleeping. Children were often left to their own devices from very early on. Nannies for the children were not an option which meant that they had to either accompany the parents to work or stay home alone. In the newly

² Luxembourg specifically was, and is still, known for its booming iron and steel industry at the time, most notably in the South with the beginning of the industrialized exploitation of the "Minette" in 1842 and the later foundation of the "ARBED Terres Rouges" in 1870. It was also around that time that new railway lines were built, further opening up the already rapidly stagnating industry.

industrialized society children were not seen as being very different from adults apart from their size. They'd wear their clothes like adults, they'd go to work like adults, they'd take responsibility like adults and they'd hang for their crimes as adults did. The concept of childhood was still very foreign to people and the mere inconvenience of it made it not worth considering. There was no time for building strong family relationships and children were often sickly and disobedient. The bourgeoisie had a little more time and money to invest in their children's development, children would not start their "formal education" until they were around seven years old before they'd only get training in manners and behaviour. The kids that did get an education would often proceed to go abroad to receive further higher education, they would therefore not enter the workforce until they had achieved full maturity. In 1881 the "loi Kirpach" was introduced, under the Édouard Thilges, the law, among other things, made it mandatory for children between the ages of 6 and 12 to go to school. The law raised an uproar of debates about the influence the state was now allowed to have on society, as with it, the state had to introduce public formal schools for the very first time. Due to these debates, the state schools ended up being heavily controlled by the church. Every school, therefore, had to be controlled by the local parish, giving it full executive right of interference. This led to laws of abstinence for teachers and resulted in many teachers' posts being taken by nuns, making education still hugely focused around religion.

Only a few years later, the then rather chaotic Luxembourgish school system, saw a reform with the election of Paul Eyschen as Luxembourgish prime minister. He believed that school, which was very uniformized, did not cater to the post-industrial society of the time. Eyschen vouched for the specialisation of schools so that students with different objectives were to be able to study differently. The "Athénée de Luxembourg" was hence made to the disposition of those, willing to pursue higher studies, an industrial school for students planning their careers in technical work, an agricultural school "for farmers' sons" and an artisanal school "for artisans' sons". In 1891, a year after the reform the sisters of the Christian doctrine, opened a housekeeping school for young girls, that a few years later would be taken over by the state as well. Eyschen's reform was heavily concentrated on vocational education, as careers in that area were vital for the economy of the time that still relied very much on the iron and steel industry. With this reform, the number of children attending secondary school increased by almost 300%, with 875 students in 1878/1880 and 2500 in 1919/1920. Another law was passed in 1912 that made primary education free of charge for all Luxembourgish children that were of age to attend, as well as taking some of its prior power from the clergy.

3.2. An obsolete system:

Now, anyone that knows anything about the school system in Luxembourg will have already noticed the clear parallels that we can find between that of the late 19th century and the one still in place today³. While of course socially, a lot has changed, in that we do not beat children for misbehaving anymore, and in that there now is a wider offer for students with disabilities or other disadvantages, the core of our system has remained the same for the past 100-plus years. Given that since the industrial revolution, society has been shifting at a priorly unseen speed, the fact that something thought of as so essential to a society as school, did not change is quite concerning, but let's elaborate:

For the society of the time, Eyschen's reform made a lot of sense, as it was directly curated to meet its economic and social wants and needs. Its prepared students for the life that was ahead of them, it took into account that many parents were not able to afford higher education abroad and gave them an alternative that was appealing to both the student and their future working environment.

Looking at it today however, we notice that it is based on a rather backwards idea of knowledge and intelligence that originates from the age of enlightenment a few centuries back. The age of enlightenment was, of course, the time between around 1620 and 1789, of the guiding intellectual movement of "the Enlightenment", which advocated reason as a means to establishing an authoritative system of government, aesthetics, ethics, and even religion allowing humans to "obtain objective truth about the whole reality". Reason was ought to save humankind from superstition and the religious authority, that had previously brought pain, death and suffering to many. Knowledge was, and is, of course, a very big part of reasoning thus excluding the uneducated from this sort of revolution. It further widened the gap between the rich and the poor, as the poor could not afford an education and follow or contribute to the ongoing discussions. This further perpetuated the idea that academic knowledge equals intelligence and that the naiveté that comes with not being educated equals stupidity. This idea that someone's academic knowledge and capacities were a measure of their intelligence would manifest itself in the zeitgeist of the Enlightenment and many centuries to come. Academic knowledge, however, completely neglects one's capacities in the fields of the arts, technology, business or sports, which can, however, count towards someone's intelligence. We've come to

³ Anybody that does not know anything about our school system will find a simple infographic in the appendix and further information on the men.public website.

a point where intelligence has gone back to be defined very vaguely, as we cannot really seem to agree on what it really is.

3.2.1. A brief inquiry into intelligence:

When researchers talk about intelligence now, they are often referring to a specific set of skills that includes the abilities to reason, learn, plan and solve problems. This theory says that, usually, when a person is good at one of these things, they are good at all of them. These things summed up in a single broad term is then called mental capability (or general intelligence by some). The idea of general intelligence, or “the g factor”, originated from British psychologists Charles Spearman in 1904. According to him, the g factor is responsible for overall performance on mental ability tests. Those that believe his theory, are usually believers in the idea that intelligence can be measured in a single number and thus advocates of the highly popularized IQ score. This theory of intelligence differentiates itself from that of Enlightenment thinkers, in the fact that it sees intelligence as a spectrum instead of a simple black-or-white-yes-or-no question, yet it did not fail to be criticized by its contemporaries and many others to follow.

Recent psychologists such as Howard Gardner (professor of education at Harvard University), have resented the idea of a single factor of the sole definator of intelligence. He, in fact, does not consider intelligence to be a single measurable thing, he instead formulated a list of seven different intelligences.

- *Linguistic intelligence*

A sensitivity to spoken and written word language, the ability to learn languages and the capacity to accomplish certain goals. This includes effective use of language in rhetorical and poetic context and as a means to remember information. This is one of the two intelligences that Gardner says, are most commonly valued in schools.

- *Logical-Mathematical intelligence*

The capacity to analyse problems logically, carry out mathematical operations and investigate scientifically. It entails the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically. This is the other of the two intelligences that Gardner often sees valued in schools.

- *Musical intelligence*

Involves a skill in performance, composition and appreciation of musical patterns and entails the capacity to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones and rhythms.

- *Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence*

Entails the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems. It is the mental ability to coordinate bodily movements, Gardner sees mental and physical activity as related.

- *Spatial intelligence*

Involves the potential to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas.

Spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence and musical intelligence are grouped by Gardner as all being some kind of artistic intelligences.

- *Interpersonal intelligence*

Is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people. It allows people to work effectively with others.

- *Intrapersonal intelligence*

Entails the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations. It involves having an effective working model of ourselves, and to be able to use such information to regulate our lives.

Gardner regroups the last two intelligences as personal intelligences and often talks about them as a single entity, he, however, keeps them separate in his listing to highlight the important difference between both of them.

He claims that the seven intelligences usually don't operate independently, they tend to complement each other, as we develop skills and solve problems. All seven intelligences are needed to live life well, we, therefore need to attend to all of them, Gardner says, not just the first two. He adds however that most people do have an affinity for not just one of these skills, the first two, being those we traditionally identify as intelligence. In his 1983 book "Frames of Mind. The theory of Multiple Intelligences", he says that the people that have natural affinities for artistic and interpersonal thinking, should get the same amount of attention and social estimation than people with that are highly articulate or logical.

Robert Sternberg, Professor of Human Development at Cornell University, was of the same opinion as Gardner, in that intelligence is much broader than a single, general ability. Yet he suggested that some of Gardner's types of intelligence are better viewed as individual talents,

rather than types of intelligence. Sternberg proposed what he referred to as “successful intelligence”, which is composed of three different factors:

- *Analytical intelligence: one’s problem-solving skills*

This can also be referred to as “book smarts” it is more in terms with the traditional definitions of IQ and academic achievement. People with analytical intelligence, are good at problem-solving, abstract thinking and evaluation skills. They are better at finding solutions not normally seen by everyone.

- *Creative intelligence: one’s capacity to deal with new situations using past experiences and current skills.*

This is the ability to invent new ideas and solutions when dealing with new situations. It is also referred to as “experiential intelligence” This form of intelligence is associated with using existing knowledge and skills in order to deal with new problems or situations. Creative intelligence can be further divided into two categories.

- *Practical intelligence: one’s ability to adapt to a changing environment*

Also known as “street-smarts”, or “contextual intelligence”, this type of intelligence defines a person’s ability to adapt in an environment or change it accordingly to best suit their needs. Another way to understand this type of intelligence is the notion of common sense, dealing with concrete everyday tasks in the best possible manner.

He named this theory the “Triarchic Theory of Intelligence” and its three components are called “triarchic components”. It is mainly based on his conviction that a person’s adaption to the changing environment and their contribution of knowledge in shaping the world around them had significant importance in determining their intelligence.

Intelligence, in the end, is very hard to define, and can therefore not really be measured as people thought one could when designing our education system. What we, however, can agree on today is that it can be very broad and diverse. Where a school system based on the Enlightenment’s theory of intelligence, that sees intelligence as measurable on a linear spectrum, is build hierarchical; a system based on a broader idea of intelligence, would have to be built on a flat organisation that is based on strengths many different areas rather than weaknesses in one particular one. This only further illustrates how grossly outdated our current system appears to be, and how maybe we are understanding our students entirely wrong because of it.

3.2.2. Understanding a diverse crowd:

The difference in our perception of intelligence is however not the only notable thing that we may use to criticise the currency of our schools. To stay in the realm of intelligence-perception, I'd like to keep talking about the "regime Classique", "Général" (priorly known as "technique") and "Préparatoire"(now formally known as "voie de préparation"). Whoever has not noticed already, the first two are direct descendants of the "Athenée" school for aspiring scholars, on the one hand, and the artisanal and agricultural schools, on the other hand. At the age of 11 to 12, a student in Luxembourg is supposed to choose whether or not they want to go into either direction, a standardised assessment test is carried through to help them, as well as their teachers and parents, decide on the matter. This test, as well as the students' academic performance, can however also strip the student from the possibility to attend the "Classique" or "Général" if it is not *sufficient*. This gives the "regime Classique" a certain prestige that is often equated with intelligence. This test, which is supposed to help make the final decision for students, only assesses a student's skills in Maths and both French and German language, which can, as we have priorly seen, not alone determine a person's intelligence. The test in the end, only assesses academic achievement, which raises the question of how and why the "regimes" actually differ, as the reasons for a student lacking achievement can vary hugely. In fact, the LUCET (Luxembourg Centre for educational Testing)'s 2018 "Bildungsbericht" gives us a number of Statistics that show possible reasons for a "below average performance". They most notably see correlations between performance and socio-economic status as well as migration background.

These graphs are basing themselves upon the Luxembourgish primary school assessment system which divides a student's mastery of a certain skill into three general areas; the "Socle atteint" in which the student is capable of the skill in a manner that is to be expected by a child of their age, the "Socle avancé" in which the student has reached a level of the evaluated skill that is higher than what is expected of them, and the "< Socle" in which the students capabilities lie under the awaited level.

The assessment of German audio-comprehension skills of the same students was each recorded two years apart, students were also asked to indicate their socio-economic status as well as their native language. These graphs show that pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged families could not exceed pupils from socio-economically advantaged families, they generally show less outstanding progress and more notable blocks.

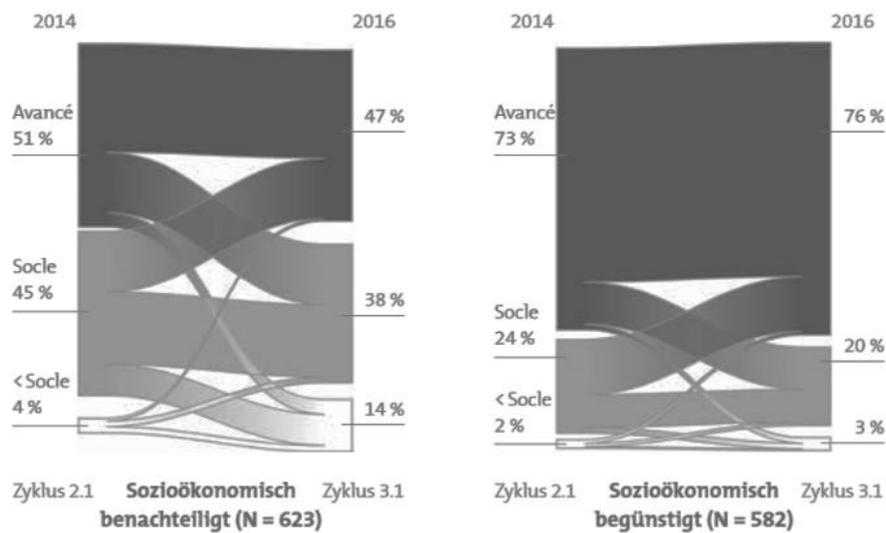


Figure 1: Developments in Listening comprehension between Cycle 2.1 and Cycle 3.1 in Terms of Socioeconomic Status. (LUCET, 2018)

Even more notable, however, are the differences we see between students of different linguistic backgrounds, where students with Luxemburgish and German backgrounds have a huge advantage to native French, Portuguese and South Slavic language speaking pupils.

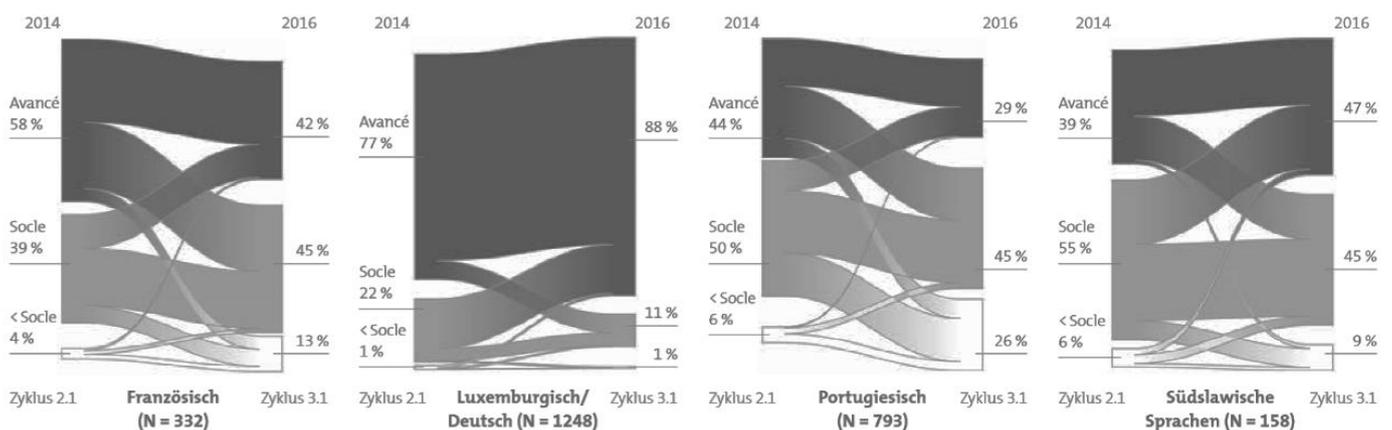


Figure 2 Development Process between Precursor skills of the Written Language in Cycle 2.1 and German reading comprehension in Cycle 3.1 in Relation to the Language background (LUCET, 2018)

This advantage manifests itself not only in the tested students' language skills, but it also transfers to their performance in mathematics.

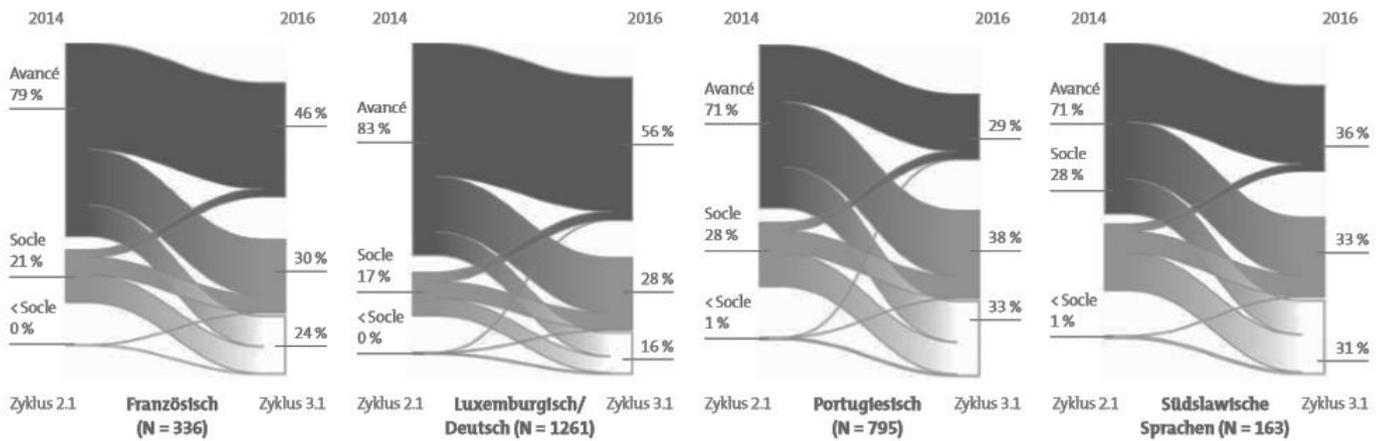


Figure 3: Figure 3 Development Trajectories between Mathematics in Cycle 2.1 and Mathematics in Cycle 3.1 in Relation To language Background (LUCET, 2018)

Here again, we can see a notable difference between the Luxembourgish and German-speaking students and all foreign language speakers, especially in the later years. The correlation between Math and German aptitudes of different language speakers only highlights the idea that the language of conduct of non-language branches can and will impair a student’s performance. This graph, which shows that over the years only a very small portion of non-Luxembourgish or German native students have been orientated into the “regime Classique”, can further underline the idea that students’ orientation is very much dependent on their heritage.

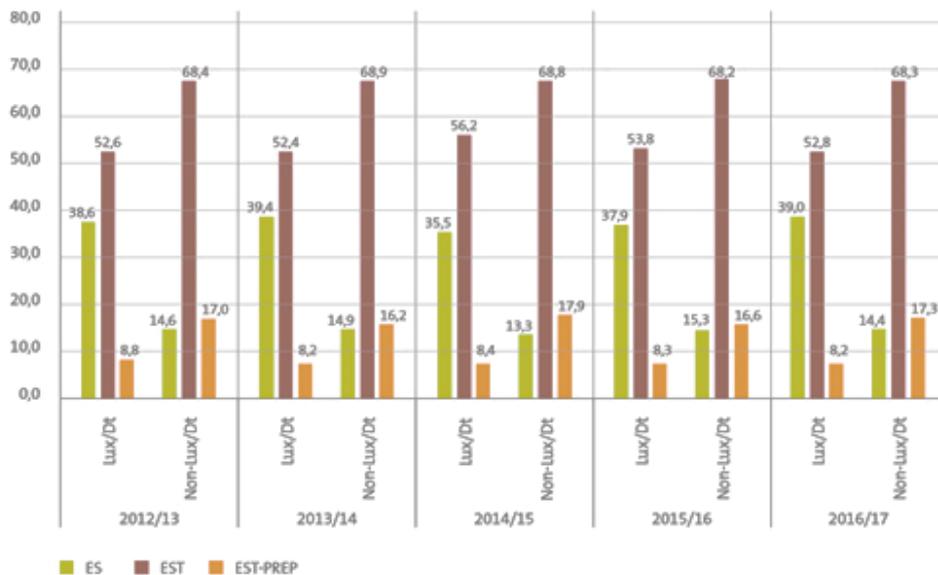


Figure 4: Proportion of pupil Population with primarily Luxembourg-German-speaking and other Language Backgrounds by School Type in% (LUCET, 2018)

This suggests that not only the languages but all tested⁴ subjects are hugely influenced by a student’s socio-economic and native background. For a country whose population is comprised

⁴ Tested in order to orientate the student into either “regime”.

of around 48% foreigners and prides itself on its efforts on inclusion, diversity and equal opportunity, this, might I say discriminatory selection system, does not seem very appropriate.

The word discriminatory might sound a bit exaggerated given the very recent negative connotation it has gotten, but by definition, that is what it is and that is where the problem lies. One of the principal *functions* of today's schools is a selective one. At the age of 11, it, in many ways, gives a student their first sentence, deciding whether they will belong to either side of what is conceived to be intellect. It deprives them of a big part of the decision-making process that involves their orientation and throws a social stigma upon them which tells them, that, for some reason, that for the most time is out of their hands, as the prior seen data suggests; they are not good enough. This can, sadly, show immensely in their performance. This Graph from an earlier rendition of the LUCET's "Bildungsbericht" shows the age at which students would regularly be in a certain grade and the percentage of students in a given year that are of that age. The LUCET again compares students from both the regime "Classique" (ES) and "Général" (EST).

Altersverteilung im ES im Detail (Prozente)														
ES 2013/14														
âge	< 12	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	> 22	Total
7 ^e	3,6%	89,0%	7,1%	0,3%										100%
6 ^e	0,1%	3,5%	87,5%	8,4%	0,4%	0,1%								100%
5 ^e		0,1%	3,9%	81,5%	12,3%	1,8%	0,2%	0,1%	0,2%	0,1%				100%
4 ^e			0,2%	3,0%	77,4%	16,7%	2,4%	0,3%	0,1%					100%
3 ^e				0,2%	2,9%	75,5%	17,3%	3,5%	0,4%		0,1%	0,1%		100%
2 ^e						2,6%	74,1%	17,4%	4,8%	0,8%	0,3%			100%
1 ^e						0,1%	2,8%	64,4%	22,2%	7,7%	2,1%	0,5%	0,2%	100%
Total	0,5%	13,2%	14,6%	14,1%	13,3%	13,2%	13,2%	12,1%	3,9%	1,2%	0,4%	0,1%	0,0%	100%

Figure 5: Repartition of age in various ES classes 2013/14 (LUCET, 2015)

Altersverteilung im EST im Detail (Prozente)														
EST Nombre d'élèves relatif 2013-2014														
âge	< 12	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	> 22	Total
7 ^e	0,6%	65,0%	29,9%	4,2%	0,2%	0,0%								100%
8 ^e		0,5%	57,3%	33,8%	7,2%	1,2%	0,0%		0,0%					100%
9 ^e			0,4%	39,5%	38,0%	17,2%	4,3%	0,4%	0,1%					100%
10 ^e				0,3%	29,1%	34,9%	20,2%	7,9%	3,6%	1,9%	1,0%	0,6%	0,6%	100%
11 ^e					0,1%	28,3%	31,7%	21,5%	11,0%	4,2%	1,6%	1,0%	0,5%	100%
12 ^e						0,1%	21,3%	28,8%	24,6%	13,8%	6,2%	3,0%	2,2%	100%
13 ^e							0,2%	22,6%	31,3%	24,0%	13,2%	6,0%	2,6%	100%
14 ^e								0,3%	24,8%	28,6%	23,5%	14,6%	8,2%	100%
99*	0,4%	10,9%	11,5%	8,6%	18,2%	24,8%	17,9%	3,2%	2,3%	1,1%	0,6%	0,5%		100%
Total	0,1%	9,3%	12,9%	13,0%	13,0%	13,1%	11,5%	9,8%	8,1%	4,9%	2,5%	1,3%	0,8%	100%

* classes d'accueil/classes d'insertion

Figure 6: Repartition of age in various EST classes 2013/14 (LUCET, 2015)

Students that are in the EST are a lot more likely to have to repeat a class and lose a year than ES students are. A possible reason for this is either a wrongly adapted curriculum that is too hard for EST students, another one would be various social factors that come with the EST orientation. This supposed “first sentence” is a morale-drainer that gives students the impression that they have failed already and make further failures less troublesome to them. There additionally comes the fact that this low morale is transferred through other students. Peer group analysis shows that if a sentiment is shared by the majority of a group, it is more likely to be transferred to further members of that group. One motivated person, hence, stands very little chance, in staying motivated if the rest of their surrounding is not.

This further pushes these students into a social box, as they are starting to see themselves in it, school further opens the social scissor, not only between the academically educated and the not academically educated but also between people of different social and ethical backgrounds. This is the principal function of school, and it truly cannot be an intended one, nor can it one that is desired. It is simply a side effect that has established itself over time.

Redefining our schools’ purpose will help eradicate these kinds of undesirables that school is functioning as, by choosing the proper aims that fit our society, we might bring justice back into our education system.

4. Setting new aims:

In a second part to this memoire, in order to come to my own conclusion on what this newly defined purpose of school might be, I'd like to look at other people's thoughts on the matter. For this I've turned to a few of history's greatest educational thinkers and their conclusions, they each carry an important message, both about the purpose of school in the author's mind, as well as the application to their time.

4.1. Jean- Jaques Rousseau – The nature of child vs. The nature of man:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712- 1778) was a French philosopher during the Age of Enlightenment. He is known for being the predecessor of liberal, conservative and socialist theory with his work on the social contract, which is one of his four major published works, in which he continuously expresses his thoughts on the destructive influence of civilization on human beings.

“Discourse on the arts and sciences (1750)” claims art and science to not lie within the nature of humans and to therefore have transformed them psychologically as well as sociologically, being a contributing factor in modern man's vanity and having corrupted our moral virtues. In “Discourse on the origin of inequality (1745)” Rousseau, for the first time mentions his theory that man himself is inherently peaceable, satisfied, equal and good all over, that it is socialisation, and thereby the introduction of power, that has made man selfish competitive and aggressive. Furthermore, his “On the social contract (1778)” Rousseau sought to determine how a society could both ensure an individual's freedoms as well as their security. His answer was a social contract, created and agreed upon by all members of society, this would provide the basis for legitimate political authority and ensure that the state's laws protected the common good. The lesser known works of his include two autobiographical pieces and a novel about romance, which still did not fail to convey his philosophical ideas.

My main focus, however, lies on a book called “Emile, or on education (1762)”, that upon its release was met with outrage and indignancy, due to its opposition to the bible's doctrine of the “original sin”, as well as the obstruction of contemporary school tradition, today “Emile” is known to be Rousseau's best and most important work.

Emile is a semi-fictitious novel, in which Rousseau expresses how he himself thinks a child should be raised and educated. In his mind, the aim of education should be to learn to live righteously and to retain that inherent human goodness in order to not be influenced by society and what it wants us to be.

He distinguishes between “natural man”, who is shaped by nature and how we behave out of society, before having to interact and live with a larger group of people, before the psychological transformation he speaks about in his other books, and the “social man”, who is shaped by society, the people we became after the beforementioned psychological transformation that made us become what Rousseau also calls “noble savages”.

Being raised as a “natural man” after Rousseau’s theory would allow us to develop our interests, opinions and morals past all social strings and attachments, to, when the education is completed, be aware of the possibilities open to us, and to be able to choose the correct option for ourselves. According to Rousseau, the egotism and artificiality that comes with being a “social man” keep us from regaining the simplicity of original human nature and the capability to choose a righteous path. He sees selfishness, egotism and self-esteem as synonymous, and claims that they are unnatural traits caused by the vanity that we created by first creating arts and sciences. Due to their unnaturalness, these attributes should be annihilated in children, who instead should be taught the love and acceptance of self.

Now, what does this kind of “upbringing of the natural man” look like? Rousseau recounts the story of Emile’s education in five books, each representing a different stage of his life. To avoid societies intrusion into his education Emile is cast away from it. For the entirety of his education, he lives in the countryside alone with his tutor. This tutor must know about and understand a child’s nature and be able to see the world as children do, to efficiently teach it.

In the first book he describes the period from Emile’s birth to the moment he learns to speak. During this time, it is important for him to get to know how to use his physical powers, he must be freed from constrictive swaddling clothes and be allowed to move around and play outside and learn the tools it will later need for the acquisition of knowledge. It was especially important to Rousseau for the child to be breastfed by his mother, as she, at this point is the only person it has a true connection to, it is essential for a child to feel a mother’s love. The child should get the love and whatever else it needs, the teacher (in this case the mother) should, however, be able to differentiate between the child’s real needs and simple fancies.

From this time onward, until the age of twelve, there should be no over taxation by scholarly instructions at this early age. Games are allowed, and the child should learn through experience, not words. Furthermore, the child should learn a trade, which in Emile’s case is carpentry, allowing the development within it as well as improving physical capabilities and hand-brain coordination.

The third book focuses on the ages of 12 to 15, which is considered “the time of learning”. Emile, however, does not learn from traditional books, instead, he learns from “the book of the world”, gaining knowledge from fictional situations provided by the tutor. The contents of these situations are however not imposed, but recommended by the tutor, who will base these scenarios in areas of the student’s interests. The introduction on books follows in the later years of this period, again the studied subjects are all based on what sparks Emile’s curiosity, what he finds pleasing or useful. This way, the child will be excited about learning, it will nurture a love for all things beautiful and learn not to suppress their natural affinity for them.

In the fourth book, the child begins their study of history, man and the social experience. They are introduced to the world of morals and conscience and most importantly are they taught about society and its corruption of natural man, to be able to then venture out unprotected into just that society without endangering themselves to being corrupted themselves. This is also the point at which the student will learn about religion. A priest is invited to give a lesson on the proper relationship a virtuous natural man should have with God, the scripture and the church. The child is now encouraged to see religion as a sceptic free thinker and discover the greatness and truth of God through their own experience.

Emile finally leaves the nest at age 25, he marries and according to Rousseau; the only chains now, are those of necessity and that he will be free anywhere on earth.

In the fifth and final book, Rousseau describes the education of Sophie, the girl that is to marry Emile. As a girl cannot be educated to be a man, she can also not be educated to be a virtuous “natural man”. Women will, therefore, need to be educated differently to men. According to Rousseau, a woman should be the centre of the family, the housewife and mother. She should be raised to strive to please her husband and concern herself with the practical side of things. This differentiation of the education of men and women is of course based on ancient theories of gender roles and could not acceptably applied today. Given the societal roles of men and women at the time however this separation wholly makes sense, Rousseau himself saying that his handling of the education of girls be exemplary, as he acknowledges their talents and aptitudes and values their position in the household.

Rousseau himself says that nobody can be sure that Emile and Sophie will end up leading a happy, fulfilling life, he sees this book more as the hypothesis of an experiment than a word by word instruction manual.

Rousseau’s purpose of school is to create a man in all the virtues of his “natural man”, uncorrupted by modern society to preserve the natural goodness of man, which according to

him can only be met by this method of education. He was very clear about the fact that he did accept criticism from anyone, willing to propose a “better” approach to the subject and admitted to his possible ignorance to certain things. The aim is to create a person that is educated well enough to choose the correct path for themselves and finally live a happy and fulfilling life.

Although this approach is very hard to imagine to work for a larger size of students, as there would have to be just as many tutors as there are students, isolation does not really work with large groups of people, and the cost of it all would for most people be unimaginable, Rousseau’s theory has somewhat revolutionized the way people thought about their children. By giving the tutor the duty to try and understand the student’s interests and desires and adapting the “curriculum” to them, Rousseau acknowledges that what makes a child a child is not solely it’s lack of knowledge. Often it is presumed that its education that makes a boy become a man, a girl become a woman, that maturity comes with academic knowledge, without taking into consideration the true nature of a child. Rousseau forces the tutor to put himself into the child’s position, to *think like* their student, acknowledge the students’ childness and figure out how to supply the transferred knowledge and skills in a way that is effective and appropriate to them. Rousseau’s “Emile” left people scandalized but kickstarted the inquiry into child developmental studies, still inspiring researchers and theorists today as it is including following a child’s wishes to find it’s calling, into the purpose of school.

4.2. Martin Luther King – Preaching tolerance and criticism:

Martin Luther King might not be as known for his thoughts on school as Rousseau, having been a civil rights activist, however, he did have a great deal to say about it. Before his historic propelling of the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964, King spend most of his academic career at Boston University, working toward his PhD in 1955. In 1947, during his undergraduate sociology studies; he published a short essay called “The Purpose of Education” in his college campus newspaper. Although he was still very young; he does give insight into the views on the purpose of education, of the youth of his time.

“As I engage in the so-called "bull sessions" around and about the school, I too often find that most college men have a misconception of the purpose of education. Most of the "brethren" think that education should equip them with the proper instruments of exploitation so that they can forever trample over the masses. Still others think that education should furnish them with noble ends rather than means to an end. It seems to me that education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of man and in society: the one is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life.

Education must also train one for quick, resolute and effective thinking. To think incisively and to think for one's self is very difficult. We are prone to let our mental life become invaded by legions of half truths, prejudices, and propaganda. At this point, I often wonder whether or not education is fulfilling its purpose. A great majority of the so-called educated people do not think logically and scientifically. Even the press, the classroom, the platform, and the pulpit in many instances do not give us objective and unbiased truths. To save man from the morass of propaganda, in my opinion, is one of the chief aims of education. Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction.

The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals.

The late Eugene Talmadge⁵, in my opinion, possessed one of the better minds of Georgia, or even

⁵ Eugene Talmadge was the governor of Georgia for three terms between 1933 and 1943, he was elected for a fourth term in 1947 but died before his inauguration.

America. Moreover, he wore the Phi Beta Kappa key⁶. By all measuring rods, Mr. Talmadge could think critically and intensively; yet he contends that I am an inferior being. Are those the types of men we call educated?

We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. The broad education will, therefore, transmit to one not only the accumulated knowledge of the race but also the accumulated experience of social living. If we are not careful, our colleges will produce a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts. Be careful, "brethren!" Be careful, teachers!"

(Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Morehouse College Student Paper, The Maroon Tiger, in 1947)

This short essay gives us insight into two points of view of the time, that of King and that of his contemporaries. He criticizes them in their thought that "education should equip them with the proper instruments of exploitation so that they can forever trample over the masses (...) that education should furnish them with noble ends rather than means to an end" (King, 1947).

This is, given the social and historical context, in the very first place probably a commentary on privilege. Nevertheless, it does raise the question of the purpose of education in the minds of these students and in that society in general. The idea that a schools' purpose is simply being something to accredit people for, as a means for them to gain power and privilege. At the beginning of formalized schools, this must also have been the idea. The children of the elite were able to go abroad to get themselves an expensive education, whereas the working-class children had to stay home and remain in the working-class, and even after many schools lowered their attendance fees, working-class youths often had to stay home to provide for their families. If the child did manage to get into higher education, it was often considered to be saving the family, making it climb the social ladder and become wealthier. Education was, at the very first place, seen as an economic organ, one that helped the newly capitalist society thrive.

Today, the social equation of a degree with power has shifted to an equation with success. Yet again, it is still often money that gets people accepted into the schools that will guarantee it to them. Or that is what people are thinking. The idea that you can trade your money for power in the form of a highly valued diploma, is becoming less and less realistic. Due to the recent influx

⁶ Phi Beta Kappa Society is the oldest academic honour society in the United States and is often described as its most prestigious honour society, due to its long history and academic selectivity. A carrier of their key is simply an adherent of theirs.

of qualified people, that is caused by the decreasing prices of higher education, university degrees have lost on value and employers are starting to shift their attention to extracurricular activities of the graduate, instead of solely looking at their grades and the money they can provide. If the purpose of school was, as these students ought to say, solely being an entrance ticket, one of its main functions would be the function of selection, which it is already, not doing very well given these latest developments. A proper selection would be being made if it were responding to the current needs of the job market and non-dependent of the socio-economic background of the student.

King, however, criticized this train of thought in another way. To him, no degree is worth anyone's while, if the student did not learn to have critical thought and social acceptance, but his statement might need to be broken down a little further. King is of the opinion, that no matter what degree a person may pursue, it is to increase their capacity of critical thought and help them to better and more cautiously handle the information that is given to them. In his short essay, he, more than once, equates these capacities with intelligence, yet, he says that the transmission of knowledge, intelligence and thinking skills, can never be the sole attributes of a well-educated person. What he saw a lot of his contemporaries' lack, was the conviction to fulfil the moral responsibility of seeking the betterment of people in general. He mentions the great dangers that come with the kind of knowledge and power granted by a degree if it is abused by someone unable to make morally upright decisions. "The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. If we are not careful, our colleges will produce a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts. Be careful, 'brethren!' Be careful, teachers!" (King, 1947). In short, King gives schools the responsibility to teach the following three lessons:

- The rejection of classist thinking and the selfish greed for power
- The capacity of quick and effective critical thought and intelligence
- The encouragement of acceptance, compassion and understanding

Yet, this paper was written during a time where racial segregation was legal and white supremacy reigned with power and force. Young King challenged both white and black peoples' pursuits of power and success by means of education, as well as the definition of education itself: "Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education". It is fairly easy to understand how such an essay came about in these times of propaganda driven injustice, but the threat it derives itself from, is still very much around today. Seeing current social and political events, it becomes clearer and clearer that if the three lessons, elaborated by King in

1947, were learned by everybody in schools today, most of the West's current problems could probably be solved. As, if everybody tried to understand one another's point of view, and actually used their brains for good instead of self-serving purposes, everything would become a lot more transparent, which is what democracies should be striving after.

4.3. Sir Ken Robinson – developing creatively:

Sir Ken Robinson is a modern British educational advisor, public speaker and author of many books on and around education. He was Director of the Arts in the Arts in School Project between 1985 and 1989, professor of the Arts at Warwick University for 12 years and Professor Emeritus at the same institution. Robinson was made Knight Bachelor by the queen for his services to the arts in 2003. His 2006 TED Talk by the name “do schools kill creativity”, the by far most viewed video on the TED platform, led to the popularization of his ideas and its distribution to the general public, making him one of today’s most influential renowned educational thinkers. As partisan of artistic education, Robinson claims that it is just that what the schools of today are missing. Robinson is internationally recognized as a leader on the development and maintenance of creativity and human potential, having devoted most of his working life on research and activism to transform the, in his mind, deeply flawed (especially British and American) school systems. In his book “Creative Schools; the Grassroots Revolution That’s Transforming Education”, he illustrates three lessons that everyone that has anything to do with education, should understand.

1. *“School is not designed to make you well educated; it’s designed to make you a useful, obedient worker.”*
2. *“When you’re teaching someone, think of yourself as a gardener.”*
3. *“The most important thing we can teach our children are curiosity, creativity and criticism.”*

These claims are a bit blunt just looking at them straight so we might want to take a look at them a bit closer. Starting at the top with probably the boldest of the three claims *“School is not designed to make you well educated, it’s designed to make you a useful, obedient worker”*.

This relates back to something we talked about before, the beginning of institutionalized education. The earlier mentioned “loi Kirpach” and its international counterparts weren’t introduced from the goodness of the leading politicians’ hearts, they were their answer to the rising need of trained workers in the industries.

Robinsons then goes even further, in saying that, the model for schools that was subsequently created, and still is to a degree applied today, was built around conformity and obedience, using the same linear process that factories did, to train the students for their future and designed to make them become just another cog in the system, which it still does. The function of today’s schools is not to make the student smarter; it is to make it a productive employee that does not

ask too many questions⁷. In this context, Robinson specifically criticizes everything to do with standardized testing such as the international PISA studies, the American SAT or end-of-year final exams such as the INTERBAC, as well as the very frontal and not interactive method of teaching that is still applied heavily.

Moving onto Robinson's second lesson: "When you're teaching someone, think of yourself as a gardener", he starts off with reminding the reader of their four-year-old self. He talks about a time in which everything seems to be interesting, and the world is only asking to be explored. He addresses the natural curiosity that young children seem to have, the sense of wonder that is said to sparkle in their eyes, and how it simply fades, the moment they arrive in school: "All of a sudden you had to do stuff. Not because it was fun. But because it was required. And you started disliking books, disliking the subjects, and you stopped exploring." (Robinson, *Creative Schools*, 2015)

Robinson blames schools for taking children's sense of curiosity and replacing it by the sense of duty that schools' trains on us from very early on, by giving us assignments. He says, whoever did not experience school this way, has to thank none other than their primary school teacher. He says in the common model of schools, it is only a great teacher that nurtures and expands the creativity and curiosity of kids instead of diminishing it, by making the classes boring and lifeless.

To refer back to the gardening analogy he elaborates, "*we can't force our "plants" to grow, but we can feed their natural desire to do so.*", which is also what a teacher should do to their students. According to Robinson, a good teacher should do four things:

- *Introduce a subject matter that engages with the students* to spark their curiosity, he gives the example of relating math exercises to basketball games, or a story they'd read. When a student can relate the subject matter to something, they will immediately be more invested in it, as it will feel applicable later on.
- *Use a different means of teaching for different students.* This seems obvious, every student is different, and the way we understand things differs as well. As it is the teacher's job to

⁷ This claim ties in with a common conspiracy theory that is especially popular in the US, insisting that the government is fully aware of this and enforcing the results to keep society orderly and not make their citizens question their authority. There is however no underlying evidence for anything alike, making time spent on this matter rather pointless.

make the student understand a subject matter, they will have to adjust so that in the end, the student does.

- *Grant children with the confidence to handle whatever difficult tasks that may be thrown at them.* Being thrown into a classroom full of children of the same age, with the same prospects, can become discouraging. The teacher should be there to encourage the student to master any task even if they have to take their own time or face some difficulties.
- *Show their expectations to be a mentor to aspire to.* The teacher should not distance themselves from the student, they should be accessible and trustworthy so that the student *wants* to learn from them and have them know about this aspiration so that there is transparency to build their trust upon.

Creative school's third lesson, "What our kids really need to develop are curiosity, creativity and criticism." teaches that hard skills and facts are not the most important things a child should learn during its time in school. The book claims that most of these, are often forgotten by the time a person enters a job and that the knowledge that is useful in a job, is usually reintroduced during their career. Beyond basic math and language understanding, Robinson says, we should teach our children competences, as these are less likely to be forgotten and generally more applicable to every child's future.

Attitudes that help you navigate life, he calls them, adding that the world is changing fast, and as there is no way in knowing what subjects will be useful tomorrow, we should focus on the three things that are timeless. *Curiosity* – the constant drive to pay attention to the world and ask questions about it, *creativity* – the ability to come up with new ideas to solve complex, interesting problems and implement them, and *criticism* – the courage to question even the answers to their own question, filter out facts from opinions and distinguish the signal from the noise.

These claims do not come from anywhere, a 2016 Global Challenge Insight Report by the World Economic Forum called "The Future of Jobs – Employment, Skills and Workforce strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution" asked itself just that question and came to a consensus that in the

very near future, at least two of these skills will not only be important, they will be essential in the workplace.

Top 10 skills

in 2020	in 2015
1. Complex Problem Solving	1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Critical Thinking	2. Coordinating with Others
3. Creativity	3. People Management
4. People Management	4. Critical Thinking
5. Coordinating with Others	5. Negotiation
6. Emotional Intelligence	6. Quality Control
7. Judgment and Decision Making	7. Service Orientation
8. Service Orientation	8. Judgment and Decision Making
9. Negotiation	9. Active Listening
10. Cognitive Flexibility	10. Creativity

Figure 7: Top 10 Skills 2015/2020 (*The Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum*)

In fact, in their comparison between the top ten skills employers demanded of graduates in 2015 and the top ten skills they predicted employers to demand in 2020, Creativity jumps from 10th to 3rd place, with all the other skills remaining to be soft skills, that are not related to the knowledge of facts.

Next, to the three lessons Robinson mentions in "Creative Schools", that are aimed to improve just everyone's understanding of education, Robinson also mentions four points that should in his mind, be the purposes of education:

Robinson says, in order for a school to be successful and achieve its purpose, a graduating student should be competent of:

1. *Economic responsibility: An economic education should enable students to become economically responsible and independent.*

"We expect education to facilitate growth and stimulate our economy, yet we are still operating under systems designed to support the Industrial Revolution." (Robinson, Creative Schools, 2015)

2. *Cultural understanding: A cultural education should enable students to understand and appreciate their own cultures and to respect the diversity of others.*

In order to be tolerant of other people and cultures, one must first understand them, and in order to meet our current cultural goals, one must be tolerant. The curriculum does not need to be filled with STEM⁸ subjects, what it needs is the cultural education that promotes the

⁸ Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

understanding and tolerance of different cultures and people, as well as finding a sense of self in their own.

3. *Social awareness: A social education should enable young people to become active and compassionate citizens.*

"You don't restore confidence in political processes simply by talking about them; you have to mirror democratic values within education. If you design a system of education on a very narrow conception of creativity and capability, don't be surprised if not many people benefit from or participate in it." (Robinson, *Creative Schools*, 2015) In order for a society to work properly, everyone needs to be aware of how it works, needs to know what their role in it is and needs to feel confident in that role.

4. *Personal discovery: A personal education should enable young people to engage with the world within them as well as the world around them.*

For Robinson, this should be the fundament on which the three other pillars of his purpose of school should stand on. He argues that schools need a richer conception of ability so that every student can find their natural gifts and aptitudes to find, what he calls, their element. "We are all born with immense natural talents, but when creativity is narrowly defined, we miss it." (Robinson, *Creative Schools*, 2015) He says.

The element, a concept with which he himself came up with, is a point where someone's natural gifts and personal passions overlap. In both of his books on the subject, "The Element: How Finding Your Passion Can Change Everything" (2009) and "Finding Your Element" (2013), he goes further into detail on how people like George Harrison of the *Beatles* or Matt Groening creator of *the Simpsons* found their element, and what schools can do to help students to find theirs. He poses several conditions for a school to do so:

- The school culture should foster a sense of community, individuality and possibility.
- The curriculum should be deep, diverse and dynamic.
- Pedagogy should inspire and engage the imagination and creativity of students and create confidence in learning.
- Assessment should motivate students to achieve at high standards.

"It's a misconception that creativity is only about certain people, doing special things, and either you have it, or you don't. We've spent too much effort in education on containing, when instead,

we can—and great teachers do—create the conditions for creativity to flourish, and each student to blossom.” (Robinson, 2006, TED – Do schools kill creativity?)

5. Conclusion:

5.1. The Purpose of School?

The one obvious factor that all three of these theories have in common; the implicit education of the critical mind. Rousseau's theory of the "natural man" is solely based on the idea of keeping the student away from the influence of society that might impair one's critical mind. The separation of the child and society is his rather radical way of raising a child so that it will not take anybody's word for granted and keep their mind sharp and agile. King says it is the job of a higher education school to remind its students that what they are taught is not simply for the gain of power but rather for the gain of understanding and tolerance toward the world around them. He says that a person that is given knowledge, should also be given the skill that allows them to utilize that knowledge for the greater good. Robinson sees the ability of criticism next to creativity and curiosity as one of the three most timeless things that in this near future will most certainly stay relevant and should be enforced by every form of education. It is, according to Robinson, the only thing we can teach our children that we'll be sure to stay relevant and serve them later on.

That is, after all, everything a school can teach; predict whatever will be relevant in the future and teach them the proper tools to be able to live in that future. The subjects and explicit topics of a person's education, should vary, always changing to prepare them for the challenges of their forthcoming life. However, much we like to preach on the explicitly taught lessons and their contents, it is, whatever we learn implicitly in these lessons that will truly shape us and what we will carry with us for years to come. Robinson, as we know, hence proposes four aims for learning that can easily be conveyed through implicit study: Economic education, Cultural education, Social education and Personal education. I'd like to wholeheartedly agree with Robinson here, a student that can value themselves in a community, knows who it is that they are and what they want, can understand and show compassion for other and understands the economy they live in and is able to handle it, is in other words a student that is prepared for the world that is waiting for them, and doing that should be the purpose of school.

As a student perceiving my fellow classmates, however, I have recently seen a foremost need for what Robinson calls the "social education". Besides the few trends that pop-up once in a while and encourage young people to speak out on certain political issues, I see a lot of complacency within student masses. Especially in EST and MO classes, I do think to see a lot of people not possessing enough confidence to value their own opinion on certain things and dare to speak up about them, which I'd dare to partially blame on the devaluation of these forms of

education by the masses. I see this as a huge threat, to our working democracy. In recent years democracies all over the world have seen what we now call a “right-wing wave”, with conservative, right-wing politicians rising to power again. I cannot fail but to blame this on the increasing complacency of the youths regarding politics, as it is us that usually pull politics back to the middle again.

Adequate efforts to make students truly value their own voices and having them understand their place in this society as well as their rights and duties as citizens, will therefore not only help them as people but society as a whole.

The idea of Robinson’s “personal education” also lies very near and dear to my heart as well as his theory of the element. How is it possible that we are ministering students for the first 18 years of their life and when they are coming out the other end of it, they still need to go out and “discover themselves”? Can’t they do that during their education? After all, the time someone spends in the education system covers most of their formative years, these kinds of things should become clear during that exact time, should they not? This is becoming increasingly important, as young children are spending ever more time in institutions such as day-cares and kindergartens. The rising housing prices are forcing parents in Luxembourg to work more and spend less time with their children, that will most likely spend their time in these kinds of institutions. On the one hand, are daycares wonderful practices for an early cultural and social education, where children learn to accept and work with each other, on the other hand, however, it stagnates personal education, as the child will spend the time they’d otherwise spend in a small group with their parents and possible siblings, discovering things for themselves, in a large group, as a large group. Whereas this is great for learning to live in a community, a very important part of being a child will disappear, celebrating milestones, finding personal aptitudes and talents, making important formative mistakes, all these things will lose importance when about 15 other people are experiencing them as well around the same time. If we don’t pay attention to children’s early talents and aptitudes, how will they learn to value them? I, therefore, think that next to, a child’s “social education”, “personal education” should in this climate be prioritized.

Another big question that I have not really addressed yet, is the explicit study. What material should a student learn in school? What should the textbooks be about? Math, History, STEM and Languages like we are used to, or do we need to rewrite everything we know? Should there be explicit learning at all? Rousseau says, and I think that with this, he lies completely right, that whereas there are certain very small basics to every topic that anybody should know, the only things that will really stick, are those that the student takes interest in. This is why, in his book,

Emile's curriculum is specifically tailored to his interests. In the same vein do I think that it is nonsensical to expect everybody to study the same things until the age of 18, rather should the "personal education" be encouraged by having the student choose their curriculum to their liking, by having explicit study being minimally standardized and as diverse as possible.

My final answer to the question of this paper can thus be summarised as follows:

The purpose of school should be to enforce an implicit personal, social, cultural and economic education, help the student develop their creative skills, challenge their critical mind and foster their curiosity; all while helping them to expand their knowledge in their fields of interest and teaching them to employ it wisely. The absolute goal of school, however, should always be to prepare the student for the life ahead of them.

5.2. Final Thoughts:

How can that new found and updated purpose help us build the ultimate new school? How can it end all discussions on education? How can we pick it apart to build a school system that is applicable to this new society and help anybody achieve their full potential?

Well, we can't. As much as we'd like there to be an ultimate solution for the problem of our broken school system, there cannot be a single one.

Finding a proper purpose for school is only a first step in a discussion that is to go on for a while longer. It is the mere foundation of whatever school system might be built on it. It is however not my, nor anybody else's turn to decide what kind of school system that might be. In a world where everybody is so different from another, and in which most of us can agree that this diversity is beautiful, why should we still think that there is only one right way to educate people? As long as these core values of good, wanting to help young people prepare for life and find their place in the world, stay central of one's education, everything around can be just as the student needs it to be.

While an amazing school system would be like a washing machine, where anything and everyone can be thrown onto a big pile, there is a program for everything and at the end, everybody comes out the way they should, I cannot think of a realistic way of implementing that. I do however think that there needs to be a bigger variety of programs in schools, different ways, to learn different things, different approaches that work for different people. We need to be more open to these different ways of teaching and learning, whoever is not, will always come back to where we are now.

I am of the strong belief that we need to shift our perception of school altogether if we want it to have the effect it should have, one where everybody is on the same page.

Parents need to stop seeing school as something that they can throw their kids into, and expect a clear result, but rather as an experience that they allow them to have that is individual for everybody.

Students need to understand that school is never a punishment and not meant to make them feel small. It is meant for them to find their strengths not to highlight their weaknesses.

Teachers must see that it is their duty and theirs alone to make a student feel at ease with a certain subject and that it sometimes takes a bit of creativity to get there. Whatever they've learned in their teacher training might not be wrong, but sometimes there are multiple solutions to a problem.

And Finally, *lawmakers* need to see that school is not a tool of selection, nor is it one that allows them to create growth by promising grand careers and paying for higher education. It is a tool for them to create happily, fulfilled, autonomous citizens of a democracy, that is in their own, and everybody else's interest to remain running stably. It is, furthermore, their duty to allow change where change is due, recognize the changes in our ever-developing democracy and give schools the permission to evolve accordingly. It is crucial that they see the deviations and repercussions that our current system shows and make this countries education system fair for coming generations and its ever-so diverse future demography.

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7. Appendix

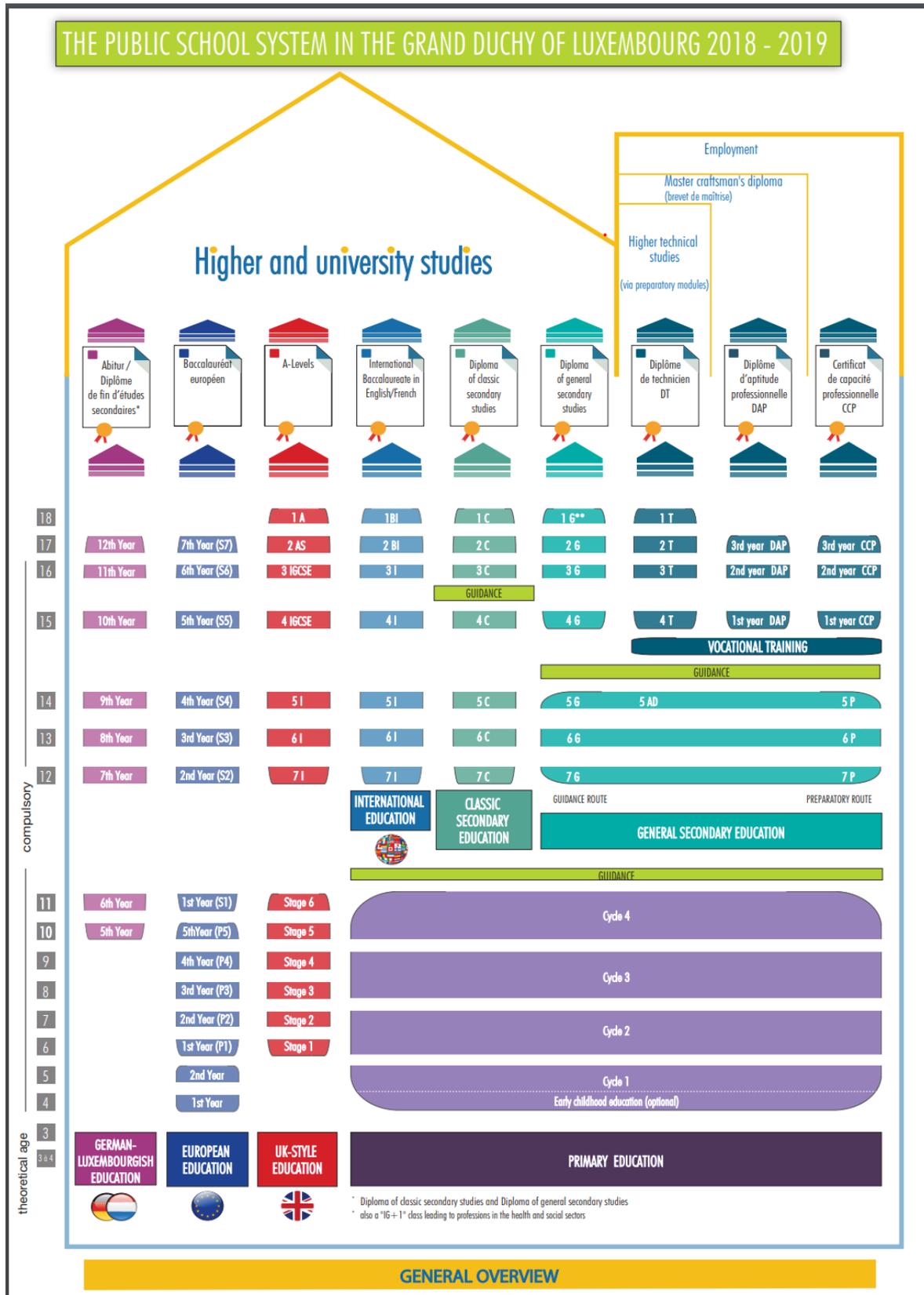


Figure 1: Public school system 2018-2019, MENJE, juillet 2018