THE TRANSFORMATION OF LEARNING

The Transformation of Learning gives an overview of some significant advances of the cultural-historical activity theory, also known as CHAT in the educational domain. Developments are described with respect to both the theoretical framework and research. The book’s main focus is on the evolution of the learning concept and school practices under the influence of cultural-historical activity theory. Activity theory has contributed to this transformation of the current views on learning, both conceptually and practically. It has provided us with a useful new approach to the understanding of learning in cultural contexts.

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The Transformation of Learning

Advances in Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

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Preface

This book is an outcome of a congress of the International Society for Research in Activity Theory (ISCRAT – nowadays known as ISCAR) that was organized in 2002 in Amsterdam. The main theme of this congress was “dealing with diversity,” and about 800 scholars from all over the world addressed this issue more or less directly from different perspectives. This book brings together a number of lectures that were delivered there and that illustrated some of the remarkable advances that were under way with regard to learning theory. Now, a couple of years later, the chapters in this book still contribute to the ongoing discussions within activity theory on learning, development, and teaching. We are grateful that Cambridge University Press is willing to publish this volume.

A few preliminary comments need to be made with regard to the spelling in this book. As scholars of many different countries and cultures were involved in the congress, we received many papers that were written with slightly different spellings of English words. The editors decided not to convert the differences into one universal spelling system. There is no reason why one system (American or British or whatever dialect of English) should dominate other acceptable ways of spelling. So the reader will find chapters with British English spelling and others with American English. This was our way of dealing with this diversity.

Another remark should be made with regard to the transcription of Russian names. Although there is a universal library transcription system for Russian names and words, different authors still use their own culture-bound ways of transcribing Russian names and words. Here we also decided not to impose one system of transcription throughout the volume but to respect each author’s way of transcribing. So the readers will find different spellings of names – for example, Leont’ev, Leontev, Leontiev; Vygotsky,
Preface

Vigotski, Vygotskij; and Luria, Lurija. We believe that there is no confusion as to the identity of the author referred to.

Finally, we hope that this book will find its way to all those people interested in the development of Vygotskian thinking and activity theory.

Bert van Oers
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