



William Peter Robinson: 1933–2021

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On 18th February 2021, we lost a dear friend and colleague, William Peter Robinson, who departed peacefully at home with his beloved wife, Carol Tayler, at his side. He was 87, a father and a grandfather. Peter had kept in touch with his friends, but his last Christmas cards were testimonies to his courage through his difficult, final years. A humble person, he had asked his dear ones not to publish his Curriculum Vitae. As a consequence, and with due respect to his wish, we will only share here some of our memories of his commitments that have meant a lot to us. Anne-Nelly met him first after she had invited him to the University of Geneva, Switzerland, in 1978. Margarida worked with him in the early eighties, when he was challenged by Frederico Pereira to organise a post-graduate course in Educational Psychology at the Institute of Applied Psychology (ISPA), Lisbon, Portugal, which they jointly directed.

William Peter Robinson obtained his Master's Degree and his PhD from the University of Oxford and was Professor of Education from 1977 to 1988 at the University of Bristol, UK, and Professor of Social Psychology from 1988 to 1998, when he became Professor Emeritus.

He was Dean of the Faculty of Education in 1980–1983 and 1986–1987 and Head of the Department of Psychology from 1987 to 1992. He was also Deputy Head of the Sociological Research Unit of the Institute of Education, University of London; Professor of Education at Macquarie University, New South Wales, Australia; and Visiting Professor at Cheltenham College of Higher Education and at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, as well as visiting scholar at Wolfson College, Oxford. In 1980, he was made Honorary Professor at ISPA in Lisbon, where he organised, between 1983 and 1988, the post-graduate course “Diploma of Advanced Studies in Educational Psychology”, in which several professors from various English universities participated. It was the first post-graduate diploma in Educational Psychology in Portugal, with an innovative psycho-social approach in this area. At this time, ISPA volunteered to act as publisher for the *European Journal of Psychology of Education* (EJPE).

Peter was one of the founding fathers of the EJPE, keen to invest efforts into creating a publication meant to promote international and cross-language scientific exchanges in days when these were very scarce, especially in the social sciences. The EJPE was also thought of as a platform for psychologists taking education seriously, considering

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it a complex reality with many stakes and in need of multiple perspectives of inquiry—not just a “field” where “results” could be simply “applied”. Peter was deeply committed to the “betterment of education” and the advancement of knowledge in favour of a healthy and just society. This meant also that he could become very distressed when he observed governments making decisions that were more concerned with training elites or aligning the skills of future employees than with supporting the growth of the mind and the wisdom of future responsible citizens.

This led to Peter’s giving important impetus to several lines of research. His long-standing research interests were in children’s development of competence with language and communication, and most of his long list of publications were about young children learning to adopt other peoples’ perspectives. With Howard Giles he initiated the Biennial Bristol International Conferences in Language and Communication, followed in due course by the founding of the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, an International Association, and the editing of Handbooks.

A further area of research concerned socially based differences in the self-perception and self-evaluation of academically successful and unsuccessful adolescents. Peter developed a model that offers an explanation for the way in which self-esteem is protected in students with low academic achievement. Based on the theory of social identity, he claimed that students, in order to maintain their self-esteem threatened by their academic failure, organise themselves around an anti-institutional culture that values anti-school behaviour and attitudes, doing so via affiliative mechanisms with peer groups with which they strongly identify. This psycho-social model played an important role in the way academic failure was conceptualised and consequently in the type of intervention of educational psychologists, breaking with the classical perspective of school psychology in which students’ behaviour was explained in terms of their individual characteristics.

Peter published a large number of journal articles and book chapters, as well as a dozen books, dealing with language and communication in children or adults with a special attention to social dimensions and meaning for social life. To mention a few of them: “A question of answers” (Routledge, 1972, with S.J. Rackstraw, translated into German); “Language and social behaviour” (Penguin, 1972, translated into Danish, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish); “Communication in development” (Academic Press, edited, 1981); “The new handbook of language and social psychology” (Wiley, edited. with H. Giles, 2001); “Language in social worlds” (Blackwell, 2002); and “Arguing to better conclusions: a human odyssey” (Erlbaum, 2006). W.P. Robinson has also edited the translation of A.R. Luria’s “The mentally retarded child”.

Finally, Peter was very dedicated to his colleagues and students. As Dean he fought for years to maintain a budget for teaching and research in education and psychology when the University of Bristol was under strong financial pressure. He was very supportive of the young academics, spending hours editing the work of aspiring researchers, encouraging new ideas and finding ways to make them known. Many international students will recall how when they arrived in Bristol, Peter would help them settle in and negotiate the English way of life.

We will never forget this very important scholar and very dear colleague. We wish to express our deepest sympathy to his family.

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Current themes of research:

She conducts research on literacy, particularly on early literacy. She has developed several projects on invented spelling group activities in kindergarten and their impact on the acquisition of reading and writing. She has also developed research on teaching strategies that promote inclusive education. She is presently interested on the role of instructional strategies and collaborative learning processes in kindergarten and primary school.

Most relevant publications in the field of Psychology of Education:

Alves Martins, M., Salvador, L., Albuquerque, A., & Silva, C. (2016). Invented spelling activities in small groups and early spelling and reading. *Educational Psychology, 36*(4), 738–752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2014.950947>

Gaitas, S., & Alves Martins, M. (2017). Teacher perceived difficulty in implementing differentiated instructional strategies in primary school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 21*(5), 544–556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.1223180>

Albuquerque, A., & Alves Martins, M. (2019). Enhancing children's literacy learning: from invented spelling to effective reading and win first grade. *L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature, 17*, 1–24.

Albuquerque, A., & Alves Martins, M. (published on line 2021-01-02). Invented spelling activities in kindergarten: the role of instructional scaffolding and collaborative learning. *International Journal of Early Years Education. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2020.1760085*

Anne-Nelly Perret Clermont. University of Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

Current themes of research:

She conducts research in social and cultural psychology; with a special interest for the study of thinking as a contextualized activity. She has been interested in the transition from youth to adulthood with special attention to vocational training. She is presently coordinating an interdisciplinary project on knowledge-oriented argumentation.

Most relevant publications in the field of Psychology of Education:

Psaltis, C., Gillespie, A., & Perret-Clermont, A.-N. (Eds). (2015). *Social Relations in Human and Societal Development*. Basingstokes (Hampshire, UK): Palgrave Macmillan.

Kontopodis, M., & Perret-Clermont, A.-N. (2016). Educational settings as interwoven socio-material orderings. [Special Issue]. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 31*(1), 97.

Perret-Clermont, A.-N., Schär, R., Greco, S., Convertini, J., Iannaccone, A., & Rocci, A. (2019). Shifting from a monological to a dialogical perspective on children's argumentation. Lessons learned. In F. H. van Eemren & B. Garssen (Eds.), *Argumentation in actual practice. Topical studies about argumentative discourse in context* (pp. 211–236): John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Iannaccone, A., Perret-Clermont, A.-N., & Convertini, J. (2019). Children as investigators of Brunerian "Possible worlds". The role of narrative scenarios in children's argumentative thinking. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science, 53*, 679–693. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-019-09505-3>, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-019-09505>