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Democratic Society and Education Research trends and theoretical profiles at the 2010 congress of the German Educational Research Association (GERA) and their significance for the didactics of social sciences.

In March 2010 the Congress of the German Educational Research Association (GERA/DGfE) was held in Mainz. This year's topic "Bildung in der Demokratie" (Education in a Democratic Society) touched upon the classic questions and concerns of processes of learning in the domain of the social sciences, i.e. social, economic or political subjects. Therefore, in these conference proceedings we intend to present the research-trends and theoretical profiles that should be of interest especially for teaching the social sciences.

Three major trends in the discipline were represented at the conference with their rather different understandings of education in social sciences: knowledge-oriented subject matter didactics, socially-oriented "Demokratie-didaktik" (didactics of democracy), and a systemic and function-oriented sociology of education. Unfortunately, dialogue between these trends was rare at Mainz. The congress proceedings will thus try to show the different approaches they take and to reconstruct the communication that was needed, but often absent. A conceptual and empirical linkage between these positions seems necessary and reasonable. The following report presents a number of research-projects which attempt such linkages and thereby reconstruct and constructively orient the inner logic of pedagogical processes along the road to an empirically founded theory of education.

Keywords:

Anerkennungspädagogik, Bourdieu, Demokratiepädagogik, informal learning, teach-learn research, Neo-Reformpädagogik, new learning cultures, competence to participate, scholastic disposition, Service Learning

A heavy sigh escapes Gunter Kress, a British educationalist from the Institute of Education, University of London, as he views the variety of qualitative research projects which analyse microstructures of educational practice in schools and classrooms: such research projects are no longer carried out in Great Britain because there is nobody who finances them and who considers them relevant!

With 2.000 participants and nearly 1.000 presenters, the congress of the German Educational Research Association (GERA) in Mainz was a kind of "showcase" of German-language educational science.¹ This year, the association had chosen a topic both rich in tradition and highly relevant today – „Bildung in der Demokratie“² ("Education in a Democracy"). The current relevance of this topic is witnessed by the fact that, almost parallel to the GERA's meeting, its Scan-

dinavian sister association NERA (Nordic Educational Research Association, www.nrfp.net) held its conference in Malmö on the topic of „Active citizenship in local, regional and global perspectives: critical and interdisciplinary approaches“!³

The topic of the congress can also be understood as a German-language take on „Democracy and Education“ – „Demokratie und Erziehung“.⁴ Instead of focusing its programme on educational concepts (*Erziehung*), it looks more to a normatively loaded idea of education (*Bildung*) (Tippelt 2010a, 20). The concept of education is used to signal a critical and subject-oriented perspective on practices in pedagogical institutions from kindergarten to public and private schools, youth-education outside school, institutions of professional and vocational training, adult education and social work. Following the rhetorical conventions of congress announcements, two questions are asked: 1. „What possibilities are there to strengthen democracy in the process of education“? 2. „Where do we have to acknowledge the limits of *Erziehung* and *Bildung*“? (congress announcement www.dgfe2010.de).⁵ Alongside this concept of education there is a „growing sensitivity towards actions that restrict liberty and violate equality“. The German education system and the

1 The GERA/DGfE (www.dgfe.de) was founded in 1964 as an academic association of educationalists in schools and universities in Germany. Behind the American Educational Research Association (AERA) (www.aera.net), which plays in an entirely different league, the GERA with its 2.500 members is the second largest educational association worldwide. Its broad-based work is carried out mainly through its 13 sections and 21 commissions. An overview of educational associations throughout the world can be found at the World Association of Educational Research, <http://www.weraonline.org/>.

2 Cp. also the issue of the Zeitschrift für Pädagogik 2010, 1: „Bildung in der Demokratie“.

3 The programme and informative abstracts can be found at: <http://www.mah.se/upload/LUT/Konferenser/Programbok%203marsx.pdf?epslanguage=sv>.

4 Dewey 1916. The classic German translation of Erich Hylla from 1929 has been criticised strongly, yet a translation to replace it has still not been produced (cp. Bittner 2001).

5 The location of the limits of education is a classic question in German-speaking discourses about education, cp. already in the Weimarer Republic Grisebach 1924, in addition Wehner 2002, current positions are outlined in Ricken 2007.



academic community studying it are still reacting to the “PISA-shock” with a „combination of diagnosing deficits and voicing intentions for reform” which, as a socially coagulated discourse, is becoming „a stable reality *sui generis*, which itself may well preserve major structures reproducing injustice.” (Heinrich 2010, 125)⁶ Education towards democracy is not possible in an unfree society because the democratic promise of equality which is communicated in educational institutions can „not be seen as trustworthy while pedagogical institutions are not only unable to minimise structural inequalities, but are, on the contrary, stabilizing these structures.” (ibid.) The question this raises is which ways of softening social inequality in pedagogical practice can be realised.

This approach, from the point of view of educational studies, addresses the structural, interactional and communicative dimensions of learning processes. The curricular dimension of learning processes, their content, took a back seat this time. In the German tradition, this knowledge dimension of learning (content knowledge) has been the domain of the subject matter didactics (*Fachdidaktik-Wissenschaften*), which specialise in the question of how to convey subject-specific knowledge and whose high degree of professionalisation could well be viewed as a German „*Sonderweg*” in education. As academic disciplines, they are usually grouped with the academic fields they teach, e.g. didactics of history within the spectrum of history, didactics of politics in political science etc. For a few years now, the GERA has been making renewed efforts towards a stronger integration of the discourse of education with that of the subject-matter didactics (see Vollmer 2007), with particular regard to their domain-specific teaching and learning studies (*Lehr-Lern-Forschung, LLF*).

Another observation at the congress was the fact that an international discourse is increasing, first of all in a considerable openness towards the other German-speaking countries Austria and Switzerland. In the following report it will become evident that the most frequently cited theoretical frameworks in the social sciences are, from a German perspective, imports. Alongside the almost canonised Dewey, they were mainly the French sociological theories of education and knowledge from the schools of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault as well as from modern political theories, with names such as Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and the British social scientist Colin Crouch among those frequently cited.

Obviously the topic „Democracy and Education” concerns classic questions and aims of learning pro-

cesses in the social sciences, i.e. social, economic or political subjects. „Democracy and Education” addresses different disciplinary „players”, who represent different approaches and who compete in the field of social science education. They differ both in their understanding of politics and the function they accord to civic education. Three types of „players” with their distinct perspectives can be identified with the functional attributes of „concern”, „optimism” and „criticism”.

1. *The perspective of subject-matter didactics*: Players with this perspective focus mainly on the curricular aspects of learning. Political didactics (Politikdidaktik) can traditionally be located here. With its paradigm of „Politik als Kern” („Politics as the core”), it refers to varied, but mainly normative approaches to political science. Its representatives rally around the Society for Civic Education Didactics and Civic Youth and Adult Education (Gesellschaft für Politikdidaktik und politische Jugend- und Erwachsenenbildung, GPJE, Link www.gpje.de). Similarly, the subject-matter didactics of economics stands for an approach which orients itself along the lines of economics.⁷ This field is organised in the German Society for Economic Education (Deutsche Gesellschaft für ökonomische Bildung, DeGoeB, Link: www.degoeb.de). Both approaches are mainly driven by concern that the democratic foundations of society could be undermined if socialisation into the political or economic system is no longer sufficiently successful.

The interdisciplinary subject-matter didactics of the social sciences, which aims to integrate civic education rather than adopt a monodisciplinary approach, was still hardly represented in Mainz. This form of didactics tries to achieve social science education through creating integrative definitions of school subjects that provide for balanced and equal instruction on all curricular matters from economic, political, legal and sociological points of view.

2. *The perspective of democracy didactics*: as a relatively recent player, the pedagogics of democracy (Demokratiepädagogik) has now entered the stage (see Deutsche Gesellschaft für Demokratiepädagogik, German Society for democracy education, DeGeDe, Link: www.degede.de). It puts its emphasis on the relational side of learning and is most strongly rooted in educational studies. Besides subject-specific teaching

6 Criticism of the PISA-study was represented in the debate with Eckhard Klieme (instead of Jürgen Baumert) by Richard Münch (2009), who refers to the very critical US-education policy debate.

7 Economic didactics (subject matter didactics of the economic domain) looks mainly at the general school system, because the field of vocational education has already been occupied by the German-speaking “Wirtschaftspädagogik” (economy-education) which is rich in tradition. Economic pedagogics understands itself as an integrative sub-discipline of educational sciences and is represented in the GERA through own section vocational and economic pedagogics. We will not specifically look at the special role of the economic pedagogics, even though there are many connections to didactics of the social sciences.



and learning processes, extracurricular, cross-school and external opportunities for social (informal) learning are systematically investigated here. Its approach is shaped by an optimistic conviction that, despite (alleged) tendencies of de-politicisation, there is a strong potential commitment to civil-society present today.

The past few years have seen sometimes heated arguments about the aims and conception of civic education among representatives of political and economic subject-matter didactics, of the pedagogics of democracy, and of an integrated social-science subject matter didactics. As Reinhardt has shown, this effort to produce clear demarcations has been largely „unsatisfactory“ to date with regard to its content, definitions and atmosphere (Reinhardt 2010, 126).

The entrance of a third player offered opportunities for constructive, new impulses, which promise to break up the hardened battlefronts:

3. *The perspective of educational studies*: numerous critical approaches developed in the educational field address new theories and results of qualitative research about practice in social-science education. With its view on the didactics in the field „from the outside“, which also takes into account the structural functions of the education system, these approaches can help to reformulate a „critical theory“ of civic education.

As GERA-Chairman Tippelt (2010a, 22-23) pointed out in his opening words, these players also represent an internal challenge for education as an academic discipline; plurality is both an opportunity and a challenge for communication and cooperation. Education has to develop the „necessary cognitive and social cohesion between the further differentiating pedagogical institutions and sub-disciplines in the pluralistic context of the wider education system. On the other hand, the relation of educational research and practice as well as education policy must be readjusted“ (ibid.). An interesting, yet irritating phenomenon observable at the congress was that while representatives of all disciplines of social science education in Germany were present and presenting, they did so in a parallel discourse with hardly any engagement between the different positions. Sometimes the players did not even seem to take notice of each other, or if they did, they expressed mutually distorted images of the other party. Large congresses mercilessly expose the lack of coherence in mono-disciplinary research, the dark side of scientific pluralism. In the following report, we intend to highlight some of the individual positions and reconstruct the potential dialogue that was sorely missed.⁸

8 The presentations have been accessible since the end of the congress in the published proceedings Aufenanger et al. 2010. A second volume with the results from the symposia and research workshops will be published this year.

1. Political Pedagogics: Oskar Negt

Surprisingly, from a political point of view, the congress organisers did not invite an education specialist to give the keynote speech, but rather chose Oskar Negt, professor emeritus at the University of Hannover and a renowned sociologist and social scientist. Negt, a student of Theodor W. Adorno and Jürgen Habermas, says of himself that throughout his academic career, he never fit into the conventional disciplinary framework. His professional origins are in youth- and adult-education within the trade unions. His concept of working-class education „*Soziologische Phantasie und exemplarisches Lernen*“ (Sociological Imagination and Exemplary Learning) (Negt 1968) can easily be read as a conception of political didactics. In his life-long study of the „*politischen Menschen*“ (political man) (Negt 2010b) Negt has always been interested in the societal conditions for civic education and voiced opinions on fundamental questions of educational policy. By founding the reform-oriented Glocksee School in Hanover in 1972, he also led a widely-studied comprehensive school (*Gesamtschule*) experiment.

In his sociological analysis of present conditions, Negt identifies a crisis of cultural erosion which (political) education has to address. Though crises typically are productive learning opportunities to civic educators, in his view we are facing three „false crises“ – quotidian realities that restrict learning opportunities and the development of political judgement. With these crises, the discourse about addressing alienation through didactics that held a prominent place in trade-union educational policy during the 1960s is re-introduced into the current debate.

First of all, we are seeing a trend towards social „polarisation“ – between rich and poor, elite- and „normal“ universities, talented people and those less so, centre and periphery – throughout society, a development which Negt considers „extremely dangerous“ and in urgent need of redressing.

Secondly, he identifies the ideology of fragmentation and flexibilisation (*Flexibilisierung*) as a problem.⁹ An „ideology of flexibility“ and a „promise of freedom“ is consciously used to dissolve social bonds, further de-racination and produce „market conformity“ in people, consequently increasing the danger of societal breakup. Through the disintegration of old attachments and loyalties such as family ties, the instances of socialisation in which we acquire social skills such as sharing or compromising, are being eroded. Yet these abilities and experiences are crucial to a democracy. As traditional norms are increasingly considered irrelevant or unnecessary, there are no new ones yet to replace

9 Here, Negt points out that the critical original title of Seneca's time-diagnostic US bestseller „The erosion of character“ was euphemistically translated into German as „Der flexible Mensch“ (flexible man).



them. This results in a desire for orientation with its attendant problematic developments. The only option left often appears to be a narrow “business mentality” (*“betriebswirtschaftliche Mentalität”*).

Thirdly, Negt sees the danger of a threefold division of society. While one third of society is content with the way things are and unaware of any crisis, the second third lives in precarious conditions and faces constant insecurity. Here, “exploitable fear” (*Angst-Rohstoff*) and belief in a social Darwinist struggle for survival are growing. The bottom third is made up of the “growing army of those permanently superfluous to the processes of production”, who – without mercy – are prey to constant downsizing even as profits are continuously rising.

Negt strongly opposes the idea of a constantly available, constantly entrepreneurial human being obedient to the rules of the market as if they were natural laws and thus not requiring an interventionist social policy (*gestaltungsorientierte Gesellschaftspolitik*). Instead, he favours using (political) education to increase the ability to assert individual autonomy and an orientation towards the common good and increase the transparency of social conditions. This is necessary because democracy, uniquely, is the only social order that has to be learned. Participation in social life is an integral element of human dignity – and dignity is beyond price. Recognition does not need to be earned!

Instead of jobs being allocated through the market only, he advocates the creation of communal jobs. Instead of a bailout for the banks, he believes should have been a “bailout for education” (*Schutzschirm für Erziehung und Bildung*). A blind obedience to the tenets of the Bologna process has subjugated higher education to an economic conception of time without maintaining the independent notion that is integral to the field itself. Education, he states, “has different structures of time from car production”, structures which cannot be reduced to economic values. Educational goods (*Bildungsgüter*) are acquired for the future, treasure laid up against the vagaries of life. Democracy requires learning in ever shorter timeframes; without co-determination (*Mitbestimmung*) in fundamental concerns in all areas of life, democratic learning is impossible.¹⁰

10 This shock at the necessity of continuous learning and the low reliability of traditional knowledge is naturally a topos which is closely aligned with the development of capitalist economic dynamics with their attendant complaints about the detraditionalisation of learning. Elsewhere, Negt refers to Goethe’s novel “Elective Affinities”: “It’s bad enough”, Eduard (the rich Baron in his best years, as Goethe labeled him) exclaimed, “that one now cannot learn anything anymore for one’s whole life. Our ancestors stuck to the learning which they had been given in their youth, but we have to relearn every five years if we do not want to be out of fashion.”

With its lively examples and anecdotes applauded by the audience, the speech somewhat resembled a political lecture in a beer tent: “Ten years ago, Ackermann¹¹, if he had held his post then, would not have dared to say, we have made a profit of 3 billion but we unfortunately have to cut our workforce by 6.000 in order to reach a 25% margin. He would not have said this at the same time. It’s a deterioration in standards of public discourse. This cynicism is now accepted and no one asks themselves what is to happen to the 6.000 people. Why do they not have jobs, when there is so much profit?” (Negt 2010a, 28) Yet Negt then falls back into national egoism, for example when he warns that “the Chinese are trying again to settle Africa now” (Negt 2010a, 27).

In current civic education, it has become customary to reflect such positionings sceptically. Is there not a whiff of overly great certainty about world history in the furious rhetoric and the superior laugh, a certainty which undercuts awareness of the real problems of incomplete knowledge and unintended consequences? What is good and right is understood too well here – by the good, obviously.

2. Approaches to Social Science Education from Subject-Matter Didactics

The proponents of a subject-matter didactics based approach to social science education were underrepresented at the congress in Mainz in comparison to their dominance within the wider field of social science didactics. Using their platform, they reflected on the “distributional struggle” between the various parties in the field “for time, positions, money, reputation, interpretative dominance and control in schools, seminars and universities, and the public sector” (Hedtke 2006, 6), which has dominated internal conflicts between the individual players over the past years.

Christian Boeser (University of Gießen) tried to outline the controversy between democracy education and political didactics in Germany. To do so, he analysed the different aims, guiding ideals and competency models that underpin these approaches. That judgement, the ability to act, and the mastery of specific methods are key competences of civic education is broadly uncontroversial. Yet there is controversy about whether habitual competences and motivation to act should be viewed as aims of political learning, and “this will not be settled for a while”. Boeser sees this as the old argument between a liberal and a republican understanding of democracy in new clothing. It takes us to the question of whether a functioning democracy requires virtuous citizens. While the majority of political didacticians argue that the aim (*Leitbild*) of civic education must be citizens able to

11 This refers to Josef Ackermann, chairman of the Deutsche Bank AG.



judge and intervene, democracy education, drawing from educational and civil-society discourses as well as American ideals, advocates the ideal of an active citizen and practical democratic competence.¹² The *Kontroversitätsgebot* (requirement to treat controversial subjects as controversial) and *Überwältigungsverbot* (prohibition against overwhelming the pupil) formulated in the Beutelsbach Consensus (*Beutelsbacher Konsens*, a founding document of political didactics in Germany, see www.lpb-bw.de/beutelsbacher-konsens.html) argue strongly for a liberal understanding of democracy involving citizens able to make independent judgment, and against a one-sided privileging of motivation and active citizenship.

However, this argument does not take into account the third principle of the Beutelsbach Consensus, the *Interessengebot* (requirement to give weight to the personal interests of pupils)! It reduces the agreement to a requirements to be controversial, the principle of multiple perspectives, and multi-perspective teaching. The Frankfurt sociologist Peter Gostmann (2009) recently pointed this out in a different context in a noteworthy special issue of the journal "Erwägen – Wissen – Ethik". He refers to the educational sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and his critique of "scholastic reason" – an argumentative figure which was centrally referred to in different fora at the Congress and which will be briefly summarised here (see also Bremer 2010).

Excursus: Scholastic Disposition (Pierre Bourdieu)

Critical thinkers remind didacticists of the social sciences that they should always reflect on the underlying conditions of their own ability to impact society. Multiperspectivity has been regarded as a paradigm of professional ethics since its inclusion in the *Kontroversitätsgebot* of the Beutelsbach Consensus in the 1970s. Bourdieu's critique of this consensus can become relevant for social science didactics in its analysis of the consequences of the *habitus* of a constructivist world view, a thinking and doing "as-if", which he calls the "scholastic disposition". At its core, it is a critique of the neo-humanistic understanding of education by Wilhelm von Humboldt and its assumption that knowl-

edge is "always by its nature incomplete". Knowledge is never "ultimate, true"; at the same time it can give the gifted "a stable, reliable reality". This *habitus* results in a socio-structural closing mechanism, the "illusion of equal opportunities" (Bourdieu/Passeron 1971). The questions to which the so disposed apply themselves, taking "playful jobs seriously", are questions that don't occur the "earnest people simply dealing with the practical things of ordinary existence that occupy and worry them" (Bourdieu 2001, 23): "The 'free' and 'pure' disposition, aided by the scholastic, implies (active and passive) ignorance, not only of what's happening in the practical world [...] more specifically in the polis and politics, but also from what it simply means to exist in this world: It implies most and for all the more or less triumphant ignorance of this ignorance and of the economic and social conditions of their possibility" (Bourdieu 2001, 24-25).

The scholastic disposition ensures a distance between those so disposed from those who do not possess a sufficient level of schooling which, ultimately, is nothing but "time free of practical actions and worries" (Bourdieu 2001, 23). The line of demarcation between the two lies in the ability to "list all possible meanings of a word out of every context and to test, instead of merely grasping the meaning of a word in a given situation and using it" (Bourdieu 2001, 22; see also Gostmann 2009). Didactic reflection on the acquisition of knowledge is analysed here from the perspective of cultural sociology as well. The socio-structural effects that result from different forms of knowledge acquisition cannot but have consequences for democracy education.

The illusion of equal opportunities is further amplified by fact that its supporting argument adopts the "practical" concern of dragging the elitist neo-humanist idea of education, the German ideology of integration of the 19th century, "out of the ivory tower". The tribulations of the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (The Federal Agency for Civic Education, BpB) may serve as a suitable example here. The aim of this institution is to enable the so called "*bildungsferne*" class (people deprived of, literally remote from education), at-risk pupils and drop-outs, to deal with their respective contingencies. They are to attain a scholastic disposition, vulgo "*Kompetenzen*" (competencies) – a process that, de facto, will estrange them from their culture of origin and disoriented.¹³ As an unintended consequence of this well-intentioned "help", the

12 In an example of school-book analysis, Christoph Kühberger (University of Salzburg) points out indirectly that the normative goals of political didactics accentuated by Boeser actually have little effect on concrete teaching-learning-arrangements. In his presentation, Kühberger shows the results of a comparative school-book study in which depictions of the EU were assessed for German, Austrian and Polish history books (Kühlberger et al. 2009). It was found that the assessment of the EU (generally positive versus critical depiction) in the different school books of the countries and the guidance to developing opinions and making decisions differed significantly. Overall it is obvious that authors of schoolbooks "have problems to maintain openness" and to avoid including a concluding assessment. Decision-making ability is also not cultivated enough in the pupils.

13 For such well-meaning attempts cp. Detjen 2007; Breit/Schiele 2008. Even the labeling as "*Bildungsferne*" (education-deprived, literally 'distant from education) – for example in official terms used by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (bpb, Link www.bpb.de) – expresses, as a critic at the congress points out, a hostility towards humans, alleging that those addressed do not already have a culture and an aspiration for education. In the USA, the label has already been expelled from the sphere of Political Correctness.



praxis of coping with contingencies by experienced experts is presented as a model of relating to life (*Das-einsverhältnis*) and coping with contingency for young people: "Those who do not acknowledge the model of ,doing-as-if' as the valid order, who do not align the distinct relevance (*Eigenrelevanz*) of the practical things of familiar existence and of the political according to the scholastic model of relating to life, do not really ,belong'." (Gostmann 2009, 267) People who, for example, politically advocate social justice instead of playing productively with the sense and denotation of the concept of "social justice", become suspicious. If the new cosmopolitanism is able today to reject a political struggle for social justice by convincingly arguing the sense and denotation of the concept of "social justice" make it a "position" which is not inclined to "accept other positions than its own as legitimate", then this ideology and the elite which support it, a class of learned public servants and rentiers, continue to dominate this society.

While Boeser analyses the relationship of democracy education and political didactics, Martina Tschirner, whose presentation "*Das neue Fach 'Politik und Wirtschaft': Citoyen oder Bourgeois?*" (The New Subject of 'Politics and Economics': Citoyen or Bourgeois?) sadly had to be cancelled due to illness, would have delivered the analogous comparison between the didactics of politics and economics. Tschirner sees the implementation of independent economic education and new "*Integrationsfächer*" (integrated subjects) such as "Politics and Economics" as a "promotion of economic education ultimately at the expense of civic education" (Tschirner 2009, 126) – a development which is not without an effect for the approach of a pedagogy dedicated to ideals of enlightenment. While Tschirner takes as her normative model of citizenship – unlike Boeser – the "republican citizen", new subjects such as "Politics and Economics" base themselves on the "liberal bourgeois". The curricula of these new subjects accept denying people an active part in society, viewing them as subjects who carry out social roles or as citizens of a state (*Staatsbürger*). Rather, they conceive of the individual mainly as an economic subject whose role is reduced to one of consumer, producer, saver etc. in a purely economic field of operation (ibid. 129). In the acquisition of economic knowledge, they also aim mainly to instil acceptance of the liberal economic order. They are designed to affirm and foster adjustment to the economic mainstream and disregard alternative conceptions of economics (ibid., 131). Interest-guided and strongly tendentious educational materials, which schools obtain from organisations and institutions with ties to business circles, impress an "assurance of

loyalty towards the current economic order" and an "economicalisation (*Ökonomisierung*) of civic education" (ibid., 132).

Tschirner's assessment would definitely strongly opposed by Rolf Dubs, professor emeritus at the University of St. Gall. In his presentation, he pleads for "economic education as a requirement for a further development of democracy" (cp. Dubs 2001 www.jsse.org/2001/2001-2/wirtschaftsbuergerliche-bildung-dubs.htm). Dubs advocates an independent subject of economic education which, unlike professional training in economics, aims for a general understanding of economics and society. "If we are not able to provide people with a sophisticated economic knowledge, democracy will fail": Since modern political problems mainly represent conflicts between different aims, citizens should be capable of judging the pros and cons of a given solution. Lacking understanding of complex economic contexts, on the other hand, leads to a sense of powerlessness, which increases receptiveness for simplistic solutions and irrational behaviour as well as endangering democracy in the long run – a development which Dubs tries to illustrate in the plebiscitary rejection of the reform of the Swiss pension scheme. An "economic and civic" (*wirtschaftsbürgerlich*) education, which on the one hand systematically builds up a knowledge base and insight into structures and interdependencies, based on macroeconomics and business studies, while on the other hand assisting in developing complex competencies of action (*Handlungskompetenzen*) and an ability to judge in problem-oriented phases of education could be a protection against unfounded emotionalisation and misguided decisions.¹⁴ However, a socio-political education, positive in its function, about general economic and societal facts should not be dominated by a mono-dimensionally functional or even a value-free economic theory. Politics, economics and ethics have to be integrated to develop a normatively founded economic rationality. In this, the ethics of economic finds its conceptional foundation.

Dubs' provocative question whether "only citizens [should be allowed to] contribute to" democratic decision-making, "who possess enough knowledge", shows the crux of the conflicts between expert lobbyists for different subjects. The different perspectives with which the same social object are being looked at by the different academic disciplines require an integrative didactics of social sciences that respects the integrity and the methods of each single field (cp. as a subject-matter didactics concept Hippe 2010; and with analogous claim Engartner 2010).

¹⁴ The greater effectiveness of his approach as opposed to only systematic or only exemplificational and topical learning arrangements could not be demonstrated by Dubs in an (unpublished) experimental study as yet.



An integrative approach – here of vocational and civic education – is already being pursued in the research forum “*Unterschätzte Bedeutung politischer Bildung in der Berufsbildung*” (The Underestimated Importance of Civic Education in Vocational Education). Sarah Heinzer und Corinne Joho (University of Freiburg) explain their research-project pursuing the “development of competency profiles for vocational education in companies”. Using the research method of the Delphi-study, teams of instructors develop typical teaching situations attuned to typical apprentice behaviour and generate competency profiles. By this method, operational and profession-specific situations can be studied which civic education can tie into to cultivate democratic competencies – an approach which in its inductive, casuistic operation could offer constructive impulses for the German debate about competencies. Especially in view of the marginalisation of regular civic education¹⁵, which is bemoaned in the Swiss vocational education system, the focus on informal learning in daily routine and profession-specific situations offer extensive, but so far unused potential as a starting point for political learning processes (cp. Overwien 2009).

A pluri-disciplinary and integrative social-science education – this was the aim of the work-group “*Ökonomische und politische Bildung in der demokratischen Gesellschaft – Umgang mit Verunsicherung als Herausforderung für pädagogisch begründetes fachdidaktisches Handeln zwischen Affirmation und Emanzipation*” (Economic and Civic Education in Democratic Societies – Dealing with Uncertainty as a Challenge for Pedagogically Informed Didactic Action between Affirmation and Emancipation). Reinhold Hedtke advocates the ideal of an individual educated in the social sciences in which both political and economic education are represented (http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/soz/ag/hedtke/pdf/hedtke_social-science-education-2008.pdf). Political and economic didactics work evenly with functional and monistic theories. This aids in the affirmation and acceptance of the learner.¹⁶

3. Democracy Education (*Demokratiepädagogik*)

In an article of the daily newspaper „taz“ titled „*Lehrstunden der Demokratie*“ (Lessons in Democracy)

15 In his presentation, Tibor Bauder (University of Freiburg) demonstrates that the importance of civic education in Swiss vocational education system in the historic change from the “*Standesgesellschaft*” up to today has been underestimated and brings up its poor curricular foundation. Along with the disintegration of the “*Zünfte*” and “*Stände*” after 1798, a gap between professional and political socialisation was created which could not be filled conceptually with a system of citizenship education by the traditional craft associations.

16 The reports will only be hinted at shortly here as they will be the subject of an entire issue of the JSSE.

(<http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/digitaz/artikel/?ressort=bi&dig=2010%2F17%2Fa0038>), which accompanied the congress, democracy education and its programme “*Demokratie lernen und leben*” (Learning and Living Democracy) were labelled as „almost forbidden”. But looking at the contributions at the congress and the keynote speeches by political leaders, democracy education actually appears to be something like flavour of the month.¹⁷

Edelstein once again takes up the argument with subject-matter didactic approaches in (2): “It is necessary to integrate teaching democracy into teacher training. Educational studies and didactics have largely ignored this issue. It was seen as part of civic education, yet this discipline did not take up the issue. Nevertheless, democracy is a fundamental question in society...” (Edelstein 2010, 11).

Like Oskar Negt, Wolfgang Edelstein begins his conference presentation “*Ressourcen für die Demokratie*” (Resources for Democracy) with the diagnosis of social cohesion under threat in today’s democratic society: “The fact that these are not temporary hiccups in fundamentally harmonious relations is demonstrated by the growing gap between rich and poor, or the massive deprivation of education (*Bildungsarmut*). Both are simultaneously signs of coming generational conflicts. Democratic competencies are the social capital of the coming generation that future society relies on.”

The starting point of this argument is a social theory assuming that the experience of being recognised by others results in experienced appreciation (*Wertschätzung*), in trust in one’s own ability to act, and thus in effectiveness (*Selbstwirksamkeit*). It is the sense of acceptance, confirmed by others, to count for something and to be able to do something, that leads to a positive conception of one’s own effectiveness, of one’s own ability to act. The basic experience of being appreciated is a precondition for the experience of effectiveness, and effectiveness is both a logical and a practical precondition for the ability, but also the willingness, to assume responsibility. The formula for this is: “Without appreciation, no effectiveness, without effectiveness, no assumption of responsibility.” This is the fundamental precondition for participation.

17 Even this year’s reports about cases of sexual abuse and violence in Catholic residential schools, but also at the “*Landerziehungsheimen*” (boarding schools) like the Odenwaldschule, which is one of the icons of reform-pedagogics, couldn’t substantially avert the imminent danger of “new reform-pedagogics” drawing the fire of its opponents. The established academic educational sciences were initially hesitant about the problem. They could not bring themselves to take a clear stance. However, cp. the statement by the GERA <http://www.dgfe.de/file.2010-03-20.0594695136>; Tippelt (2010b, 5) (<http://www.dgfe.de/file.2010-03-29.5121187559>) and in the daily press (<http://bildungsklick.de/a/72641/reformschulen-liberalitaet-und-erfolge-nicht-infrage-stellen/>).



For Edelstein, competence to participate becomes the magic formula.

This argument has implications for the design of school culture: recognition and appreciation of each individual “at all times and everywhere in the context of interactions within schools” is the precondition for participation in a school community to be perceived as meaningful. How can such a concept be put into practice?

The fact that the curricular building blocks of practice designed to promote democracy have taken centre stage is interesting in itself and an indicator for the degree of maturity that democracy education has attained as a discipline. Edelstein highlights three such designs that logically derive from each other and closely interlink.

1. *Klassenrat* (class assembly): *Klassenrat* as an approach to democratic self-regulation is consciously linked to the concept of the French pedagogue Célestin Freinet (1979) in theoretical terms. *Klassenrat* is the basis for representative democracy in schools, whose actions it legitimates, but which it also controls through class representatives feeding the results of deliberations in school committees back to the class. Edelstein conceives of school constitutions as a two-chamber system. On the one hand, there is an elected student representation (*Schülervertretung*, SV). On the other hand, there is a system of class assemblies (*Klassenratsystem*) which “validates” and functionally “legitimates” the SV “differently and more intensively than a representative system by itself could”. This expresses a fair amount of grass-roots democratic scepticism about the principles of representation even at school.

2. *Lernen durch Engagement* (Service Learning): here, the distinction between “school-internal” and “school-external politics” (*Schulinnenpolitik* and *Schulaußenpolitik*) becomes an important issue. The democratic self-regulation in class assemblies (*Klassenrat*) provides a basic experience of political discourse based on the common good in the internal sphere. The promotion of civic commitment as external politics is the subject of Service Learning, a sub-form of project-oriented didactics (*Projektdidaktik*). Service Learning has students assuming responsibility which extends beyond their persons, groups, or problems related to their school in the wider community or the environment. A number of case studies on Service Learning were presented at the congress, among others those of university projects in non-educational departments (see the research projects “servU” and “jeeps” at Würzburg University <http://www.bildungsforschung.uni-wuerzburg.de/>). These are often informed by the idea of Social Entrepreneurship. It would be worthwhile to test and scientifically evaluate the informational learning effects of Service-Learning internships within the context of educational degrees, because here action and

reflection are completely interlinked at most times. It is not an adequate response to dismiss these social projects as depoliticizing “band-aids” in the course of a development towards a society depending on charity (*Charity-Gesellschaft*). The subject-matter didactics of the social sciences has not yet opened itself to the informal processes of political learning which go hand in hand with such social projects either conceptually or empirically (See also Overwien 2009, biography-orientated case-studies, for example Thon 2008). Long-term studies on the learning processes in such projects remain much to be desired.

3. *Deliberationsforum* (deliberation fora) and *Diskurslernen* (discourse learning): these building blocks encourage the transfer of the individual responsibility of solidaric actors from the out- to the inside, from the community into the school (see also Anne Sliwka <https://blk-demokratie.de/materialien/beitraege-zur-demokratiepaedagogik/sliwka-anne-2005-das-deliberationsforum-eine-neue-form-des-politischen-lernens-in-der-schule.html>).

That Edelstein’s three building blocks are realised in the current school reform can be seen from numerous congress contributions. The concept of *Unterricht* (instruction) has disappeared in the new “model schools” of democracy education. The word *Unterricht* does not appear in the schedules of schools such as the Max-Brauer-Schule in Hamburg. It has been replaced by *Lernbüro* (learning office), *Werkstatt* (workshop), *Atelier* (studio), or *Projekt* (project), often in connection with *Wochenplanunterricht* (week-plan-teaching) and *Stationenlernen* (station-learning). This creates the need for micro-didactic qualitative empirical follow-up studies and analysis of these new learning cultures in transition. These new learning cultures can strengthen exclusionary mechanisms, by creating further confusion and lack of orientation for “*Bildungsferne*” (those deprived of educational opportunity). The deliberate lack of systematic transition of the order of knowledge in the new learning cultures can produce new privilege for the elites because they have grown up with the requisite *habitus*¹⁸. Therefore, arguments for reform pedagogics as a response to PISA mistake causes for effects. This conservative criticism was not represented at the GERA-congress. Research that critically evaluates these new learning cultures is at an early stage. Overall, democracy education still seems programmatic, idealistic, not very analytical and critical. Yet there have been some studies on this issue

18 Conservative critics of new reform-pedagogics interpret the results of the large-scale comparative studies to demonstrate that those countries with the lowest proportion of reform-pedagogical methods achieve the best performance of “*bildungsferne*” (education-deprived) pupils. This means that reform pedagogics should not be considered a valid response to the results of the PISA study. This position was not represented at the congress.

already, and their results are ambivalent. For the *Klassenrat*, Heike de Boer (PH Freiburg) has highlighted the tensions between the authority of the school and the autonomy for action. Within the structure and manner of participation in school, the *Klassenrat* must not become a forum for inter-individual conflicts – a “deputy sheriff” (Boer 2008; see also Reh/Labede 2009). This is the case when, for example, the ADHS-related problems of the student “Micha”, obviously with his consent, are discussed in the public space of the classroom, with the classically paternalistic outcome to “leave Micha the way he is”. This dimension of power can be seen as a factor of development in school in the discourses and practices of participation (or so it was argued in a symposium). In some research forums at the congress the criticism formulated by qualitative research has already been received. Yet, the case studies of the BLK-programme “*Demokratie lernen und leben*” (Learning and Living Democracy) are still often dominated by a naive optimism about the new learning cultures, the (justified) pride in things achieved.

At the level of school development, Edelstein is also in favour of “lighthouse-schools with guiding character”, allowing others to learn from example. The “*Deutscher Schulpreis*” (German school prize) (www.schulpreis.bosch-stiftung.de), awarded annually by the Robert-Bosch-Stiftung and the Heidehof-Stiftung since 2006, provides sustainable impulses for democracy education, quality of learning, and school development. The importance of the seven criteria for quality (performance, approach to diversity, quality of teaching, responsibility, school climate/ school life, external partners, school as a “learning institution”) for schools’ organisational development is illustrated by Michael Schratz (Innsbruck University) with the help of numerous real-life examples. Schools as places of re-production and transformation, of societal continuity and change, can develop best when the structurally analogous learning processes of students, teachers, and of the school as a system are aligned (<http://schulpreis.bosch-stiftung.de/content/language1/downloads/Kriterien.pdf>). Sylvia-Irene Beutel (TU Dortmund) argues that the central criterion for the quality of schools which were awarded the *Schulpreis* is the manifold opportunities for participation in school life, teaching, and processes of education. Based on her own research, she attributes great weight to the activation of students, the reflection on their own learning processes, and the participation in the evaluation of performance individually and in dialogue.

The continuing controversy about these new developments is highlighted by the fact that the developments judged as innovative and rewarded by the *Deutscher Schulpreis* were sanctioned as deviation from the norm by German education officials before the award. This gives the *Schulpreis* the politically

important role of strengthening leading schools, supporting them in their development and cooperation, and to position them as “Best-Practice” organisations for other schools to follow. Participation in the award in itself would lead to changes in the consciousness of school and developments which lead to agreement about the aims, tasks and understandings about education. The quality of instruction is identified as “the weakest link” in judging the schools. Subject-matter teaching can not be sufficiently evaluated by judges. In terms of subject-matter didactics, the award is still unspecific. It was also critically noted in the discussion that the existence of a varied and participatory school culture allows only limited conclusions about the possibilities for participation in subject-matter teaching. It seems worth considering how the “treasures of subject-specific teaching” can be assessed, and whether, seeing the positive experiences with the *Deutscher Schulpreis*, there should be an analogous process for subject-specific teaching practice. Lighthouse schools should be strengthened and supported by competent and effective teaching (Berg 2009).

Let us now return to the relation between *Klassenrat* structures and student representation. Hans-Peter Füssel (HU Berlin/DIPF Frankfurt) in his presentation “*Von der Schulverfassung zum Schulvertrag: Demokratie zwischen Schulrecht und Schulpraxis*” (From School Constitution to School Contract: Democracy between School Law and School Practice) at last looks at school democracy in the context of a democratic society, an “intermediate level” of the triad of democracy still often conceptualised as hierarchical, being a mode of coexistence, a type of society, and a form of government. The analysis focuses on the growing importance of student participation in schools. The idea of student co-administration has been extended from the stage of mere simulations of democratic interest representation – a “democratic sandbox”, to a broader participation in the educational aims of school (*Bildungs- und Erziehungsziel*).

Füssel (see 2009, 55-56) argues that the term “school constitution” lumps together different approaches, lines of argumentation and targets, which leads to intransparency of the participation and co-determination in school. Füssel distinguishes between four basic approaches:

- conceptualisations of the school community, which emphasise the emotional commitment of those participating in school,
- pragmatic approaches, which focus on minimising conflicts through possibilities of participation for all involved,
- concepts which aim to provide practical training of democratic modes of behaviour, as well as,
- models which aim at participation in school as an implementation of the basic principle of democracy in all areas of society.

The focus of Füssel's analysis lies on school contracts. He distinguishes three types of school- and class-contracts. The first type is educational contracts and teaching-learning-contracts (*Lehr-Lern-Verträge*), with varying degrees of legal commitment. Here the decisive aspect is the "process of agreeing, of bargaining for the different parts of the agreement" (61). School contracts provide substantial scope for experience in democratic competencies through learning by doing (62). Bargaining processes between those involved in schools should be a fundamental criterion to identify good teaching practice (*Unterrichtspraxis*). Füssel regards the legal basis as sound: the Federal Constitutional Court has tasked the school with education towards freedom of expression; the guiding principles of educational policy and school constitutions aim to allow the joint development of and agreement on a diverse range of educational questions, for example in plans for remedial measures, behaviour agreements, or disciplinary measures. To the extent that schools were acting increasingly autonomously and governmental micromanagement eased, forms of communication and decision-making would change as well. Yet, as the presenter makes clear, the actual practice often lags behind the legal rights or even ignores them. Bargaining, and the change of communication cultures in school, are "uncomfortable". It was also unclear, from a legal point of view, what the consequences would be if agreements were not adhered to or bargaining processes failed. At the same time, tensions developed between the autonomy of schools and the administrative hierarchies which continued to exist – a problem which is also remarked on by Jan Hofmann (Lisum Berlin-Brandenburg) in his commentary. The dilemma between micromanagement and independent responsibility, autonomy and external evaluation, administrative structures and school-internal bargaining processes remains, as yet, unresolved.

It is thus clear that the forms of practice today deployed to teach democracy in school form a more than adequate subject for political didactics and its paradigm of *Politik als Kern* (politics as the core of civic education). Bargaining processes can be used as opportunities for learning. Ambivalences and misunderstandings in processes of participation can be highlighted in a self-governing school. We could do worse than to recall the statement by political didactician Ernst-August Roloff: "Let the subject of civic education in school be the school!" (*Gegenstand politischer Bildung in der Schule sei die Schule!*, Roloff 1972, 171-172).

4. A View from the Outside: An Educational Studies Based Criticism of the Subjectivisation of Education

Two definitions and concepts are central to this approach: participation and positive appreciation (*Anerkennung*).

Pedagogical issues are often referred to metaphorically. Therefore, they have always been the subject of academic analyses which have questioned the content, form and function of such metaphors. In his plenary presentation "*Zur Kritik persuasiver Metaphoriken im pädagogischen Demokratiediskurs*" (On the criticism of persuasive metaphors in pedagogical democratic discourse), Roland Reichenbach (University of Basel) argues for a comparison between countries at this level to allow a "de-mystification of pedagogics". If Germany was even partially right in its isolated approach, France's totally different one would have to produce only failures... Civic education would also be more attractive if it were to pay more attention to dimension of power. The de-construction of the persuasive metaphors of the concept of participation as "controlled participation" (*gelenkte Beteiligung*) is important here (Michael Vester). To a degree, at least, democracy education was shaped by metaphors of community (*Gemeinschaftsmetaphoriken*). To see the mere presence of activity as positive (*Partizipationseuphorie*) was "nonsense" because it did not take account who was participating and what their aims were. Democracy education was therefore "only useful in the mythical, the undefined" realm. Concretely, the flaws of the concept are evident in the pseudo-participation, the poor motivation to participate, or the oligarchical structures it produces. Ambivalence towards participation has to be accepted. A large part of the politicisation of young people is seen not as a consequence of democratic learning, but rather of the absence of democracy. (Roland Reitenbach: *Immer stimmt etwas nicht...*) (http://www.fhnw.ch/ph/kontakt/pdf-publikationen/polis_2008.pdf).

Positive appreciation between people with different opinions is a basic principle of democratic behaviour. Sabine Reh (TU Berlin) and Norbert Ricken (Bremen University) also initially refer to the trope of "democracy in crisis" in the introduction to their working group "Anerkennung als Dimension pädagogischer Praktiken" (Positive Appraisal as a Dimension of Pedagogical Practice). This crisis is viewed primarily as a threat to the principle of equality. Hoping to resolve this crisis of democracy through education is problematic, because education itself is structured hierarchically, reproduces and creates inequalities, protects privileges and encourages selection. This has been demonstrated in the plenary presentation by Martin Heinrich: "Through a summative objectification of performance, individual perspectives for development are made to disappear and, consequentially, a de-pedagogisation of the process of education takes place. In terms of this shift of emphasis of the pedagogical at least, it has to be noted that the idea of individual development (individual reference norm) is substituted by a new norm: the willingness to make an effort. The emphasis is not on whether a



given performance represents a significant advance in learning, but rather whether the student worked hard for it, mainly judged against fixed criteria and ranked against the peer-group." (Heinrich 2010, 129). This, according to Heinrich, leads to a "positively confusing entanglement between German idealism and neo-liberalism" (Heinrich 2010, 131). A side-effect of this is that "the hypostasis of competitive struggle under conditions of ubiquitous competition leads to a devaluation of nearly all personal educational achievements: No-one is ‚good enough!'" (Heinrich 2010, 141).

The concept of positive appreciation is viewed as in danger of being received and made to function as a normatively charged category. Acceptance is mostly equated with praise and reward. "Performance apologists" (*Leistungsapologeten*) accuse "soft pedagogues" (*Kuschelpädagogen*) of reducing it to a naive and one-sided action of appreciation (*Wertschätzungshandeln*) (Balzer/Künkler 2007). Acceptance must be liberated from the close connection and identification with purely supportive, well-meaning, or even loving actions, because indifference or even rejection are not only possible forms of inter-subjective experience, but in themselves necessary moments of acceptance. Acceptance, understood as a paradox set of actions – of appraisal and gifting on the one hand, appraisal and denial on the other – has to be analysed from a perspective of power relationships. Yet, such a "pedagogy of acceptance" (*Pädagogik der Anerkennung*) is problematic because education is always also positively or negatively appreciative behaviour. A restriction to positivity alone would be dangerous, because negative reinforcement is not necessarily an evil in itself and positive appraisal only serves as means of raising a student's feeling of self-effectiveness if given by someone who is perceived as an independent judge. Relating to classroom teaching, it is preferable to speak of *Wertschätzung* (appreciation). In light of the many forms of being ignored that people experience in democracies, the development of a culture of appreciation in schools is significant, especially given the growth of cultural diversity.

The effects of processes of positive and negative appreciation have been analysed using different qualitative case studies on the pedagogical reproduction of the social sphere. These research projects examine the ambivalence of pedagogical positive appraisal and the symbolic power that comes with it. Two research groups here represent the state of the art.

On the one hand, there are the research groups around Werner Helsper at the Zentrum für Schulforschung (Centre for school research) at the Martin-Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg. Using qualitative case studies, Rolf-Torsten Kramer et al. (2009, 73-119; see also Helsper et al. 2008) analysed the transitional experiences in the education system from the point of view of students. Especially the informal social

learning connected to these transitions is of great relevance for the didactics of social sciences. This social learning imprints itself – with a near-physical quality – into the memory of adolescents as social knowledge. The reconstruction of the experience of the children "Aron" and "Clemens" on their way from primary to secondary school are a must-read! (Kramer et al. 2009, 73-119)

On the other hand there is the research group around Christoph Wulf at the Department for Anthropology and Education at the Freie Universität Berlin. Here, the research methods used are primarily ethnographic. In the project "*Gesten der Anerkennung*" (gestures of positive appreciation), the significance of gestures in pedagogical actions and their pedagogical potential are examined. Bodies function as medium of discovery and knowledge transfer which enable students to acquire practical knowledge through mimetic shadowing. In impressive scenes located at neuralgic points of transition between different forms of teaching and with a view to school-specific evaluation techniques, it can be shown what role gestures play in the acquisition and passing on of concrete educational content and patterns of behaviour. Different forms of teaching – individual work, learning-centred phases, group learning, open teaching phases and project teaching – are compared to analyse the relationship between the didactic context, the practices of dealing with concrete teaching equipment, the acceptance and shaping of learning territories, as well as the verbal and non-verbal interactions. What roles do gestures play, for example in the acceptance of the pedagogical authority of teachers? (see also: <http://www.ewi-psy-fu-berlin.de/einrichtungen/arbeitsbereiche/antewi/sonderforschungsbereich/projektbeschreibung.html>; the description follows the representation on the webpage. See also the project "Appreciation, learning atmosphere, judging performance" (*Wertschätzung – Lernatmosphäre – Leistungsbewertung*) <http://www.languages-of-emotion.de/de/211.htm>, the description follows the representation on the homepage.)

Most contributions in the working group "*Distanziert involviert – pädagogische Perspektiven auf Subjektivierungen des Politischen*" (Distantly Involved – Pedagogical Perspectives on Subjectivisations of the Political), moderated by Agnieszka Dzierzbicka (Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien) and Astrid Messerschmidt (Pädagogische Hochschule Karlsruhe) concern theoretical fundamentals. In his presentation "*Fluchtpunkt Zivilgesellschaft?*" (Civil Society – Vanishing Point), Carsten Büniger analyses civic education in conditions of post-democratic activation – "critically as usual" (Ludwig Pongratz) – in the institutional context of the TU Darmstadt and in the tradition of Joachim Heydorn's (2004ff.) education theory. While the shift towards the "New Subjectivity" (*Neue Sub-*



jektivität) was hailed a sign of hope in the 1980s and 1990s, the concept is now subject to critical deconstruction. Bünger bases his criticism mainly on the concept of post-democracy by the British sociologist and political scientist Colin Crouch (2009). Using this, he demonstrates impressively why civic education cannot do without a sociological diagnosis of current conditions. "While the forms of democracy remain fully in place – and today in some respects are actually strengthened – politics and government are increasingly slipping back into the control of privileged elites in the manner characteristic of pre-democratic times; and that one major consequence of this process is the growing impotence of egalitarian causes." (Crouch 2009, 6). In the post-democratic age the existence of both privilege and social hierarchies is being denied. It has become increasingly difficult for people to conceive of themselves as a clearly defined social group. Governance is understood in the sense of micro-economic rationality. Everywhere "phantom companies" are popping up, such as public management or public-private partnerships, job-centers and finally in the *Ich-AG* (a subsidised form of small-business self-employment in Germany), the expectation of life-long identity management and the social networks of the new media. It has long become normal in civic education to refer to participants as "customers". The ideal is the self-determined consumer, always flexible and ready to perform (see also Lösch/Thimmel 2010). "Agreeing instead of ordering" (*Vereinbaren statt anordnen*) is the pedagogic solution! (for the relevant buzzwords see Dzierzbicka/Schirlbauer 2/2008; a very good example is "*Planerfüllung*" (plan fulfillment) in the week-plan-teaching in Huf/Breidenstein 2009). The political party of the 21st century is a company, no longer the representation of a clearly defined political milieu. To attribute the crisis of democracy solely to mass media and the growing influence of PR-professionals and spin doctors does not go far enough. Citizens fall into the trap of limiting their involvement to complaints, which is helped by a scandalisation of politics in the media. There is a personalisation of politics – individuals who have done wrong – a politicisation of the private in line with the privatisation of the political. Even the form of criticism of post-democratic effects can itself serve to strengthen this model (see Reichenbach/Breit 2005). In this "role trap" (*Rollenfalle*) citizens are systematically under-challenged, which makes all complaints about their ineffectiveness as "the real Achilles heel of society" (Reinhold Hedtke)¹⁹ appear as a naive underanalysis.

Even the concept of "civic society", readily adopted and propagated by democracy education, seems less of a reason for hope than a de-politicised vanishing

point, a sphere between the state and the market and the ideal link between civic commitment and the democratically constituted political public sphere. Its focus on individual willingness to act has opened the way for the pedagogisation of the political, for example in projects of Service Learning (*Verantwortungslernen*, learning responsibility). Here, the declaration of commitment as a moral virtue per se can follow quickly. This is characteristic of the socially activating state (*sozialer Aktivierungsstaat*) and its economy of appreciation (see Lessenich 2009). An example of this is the trend, linked to Service Learning, towards the so-called charity society, restructuring help and caring under conditions of a changing welfare state, as exemplified by often multiply award-winning projects such as the charity "Die Tafel" (the table) (www.tafel.de), or "Aktion Mensch" (initiative human) (www.aktion-mensch.de). References to the political are increasingly articulated in the shape of calls to action. Participation has been advanced to a democratic good. We are surrounded by ever-present imperatives – Please Cooperate! The order to obey has been replaced by the invitation to participate. This criticism, represented at the congress by, among others, the Vienna group (Katharina Morawek/ Marion Thuswald), sees participation as an aestheticised demand to identify with the corporate identity. Participation is revealed as pseudo-participation – a case of *deja-vu*, because once before a social movement, the 68ers, had shown their own institutional offspring, the citizens' initiative movements as agents of integration. In the end, social problems will not be solved because their causal factors are not named and only the symptoms addressed.

What to do in a situation in which it is becoming increasingly difficult to voice opposition and to question consensus formulas? No-one wants to be left looking "undemocratic", and that makes it difficult to say No. What is needed is a pedagogical approach to the imperatives of innovation and participation: How is it possible to escape the activating demands, yet remain involved while reflecting one's unease? On this issue once more Crouch (2009, 111): "On the one hand, it would seem that in post-democratic society we can no longer take for granted the commitment of particular parties to particular causes. This would lead to the conclusion that we should turn our backs on the party fight and devote our energies to cause organizations that we know will continue to press the issues about which we care. On the other hand we have also seen that the fragmentation of political action into a mass of causes and lobbies provides systematic advantages to the rich and powerful far greater than did a more party-dominated politics, where parties stood for relatively clear social constituencies."

The practice of civic education can not focus all its efforts on institutions such as the functional logic of

19 Hedtke can show critically that this topos extends through both political and economic didactics.



the complex EU multi-level systems; at the same time “activation to service” is not a universal solution. The focus should be on finding ways to “relate difficulties to structures”, “reveal the political nature of the social” and co-operative problem solving as a medium for the individual development of the ability to resist. The tension between de-politicisation and new forms of political commitment needs to be explored. Civic education should become an actor in the critical reflection of processes of subjectivisation. This concept of a democratising education is formulated in accordance with principles of radical democracy – as opposed to representative democracy (see Laclau 2010, Mouffe 2009). The field of identity-creation should under no circumstances be left to right-wing extremist parties that would otherwise fill this vacuum. Thus, it is critically argued from the audience that critical reflection is not in fashion any more! In the end, you can not grow up in deconstructions. At the same time, the concept of “de-linking education” remains too nebulous. Is it in the final instance just about a renaissance of working-class education – class- or milieu-specific?²⁰

Politicising education as a source of relief for the subjects in the activating state has to be made perceptible instead of powering the onerous preachiness that surrounds us. A sharpening of perception must be privileged over a reactive (i.e.: traditionally democracy-educational) actionism. The question poses itself: How can one not do something, not participate, abstract oneself “a little bit”? The ability to resist in a post-democratic environment lies in not doing “certain things”, and in helping to bring marginalised issues to attention (Astrid Messerschmidt, TU Karlsruhe). As an aesthetically informed concept of civic education, it should create time and space for perception and analysis – an approach which once more meshes with the demands voiced in the keynote speech by Oskar Negt.

Any curricular consequences of this criticism, its didactic and methodological realisations, remain – yet? – vague. “We have to act as though doing ‘the right thing’ exists, though we can never achieve it, we have to fight for this.” (Agnieszka Dzierzbacka, Vienna). The underlying concept of knowledge, the question how to deal with uncertainties and indecisiveness, needs to be developed further. Just in time for the congress, a handbook titled “Kritische politische Bildung” (Lösch/Thimmel 2010) was published, which offers perspectives on this. It says that “in the class- or

seminar-room, the point cannot be confronting the ‘ideology’ of (post)neo-liberalism with an alleged unproblematic ‘truth’ of the social, but rather showing alternative forms of practice and developing criteria of its emancipatory benefit ...” (Graefe 2010, 177). Criticising subjectivisation does not mean giving up subject-orientation as a principle of civic education, but taking up the beliefs and opinions of participants and making them the subject of critical questioning with a view to enhancing the possibilities to think and act. The method is roughly characterised as “socioanalysis” (Pierre Bourdieu), necessarily linked with Sigmund Freud’s concept of the psychoanalysis: to oneself become and to make others conscious of the social embeddedness of the individual. This does not result in “shutting down” the *habitus* but allows the individual to bring his dispositions under control – “to understand the game we play” (Bremer, 191). This is the revival of the third didactic principle of Beutelsbach, the principle of (collective?) interest-orientation. It requires (1) thorough work on the concepts, (2) a close look at the social realities which surround us every day, and (3) the joint development of alternatives. Overall, it is about “regaining a critical theory of civic education” (Lösch/Thimmel 2010) – an interesting perspective, which has to be approached from both the conceptional and the empirical side! It revolves around a conceptional and empirical linkage of the players, of the knowledge-oriented subject-matter didactics of social sciences, relationship-oriented democracy education, and the systemic and function-oriented sociology of education (Liesner/Lohmann 2010). Consequently, it concerns the areas of curriculum/knowledge and education as well as the sociology of education and educational policy. In the end, an empirically based theory of education would emerge which reconstructs and constructively orients the inner logic of pedagogical processes in educational background studies.

20 This could be observed in the heated debate, at roughly the time of the congress, about Turkish private higher secondary schools (Privat-Gymnasien) in Germany, which the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan triggered during his visit to Germany. (<http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2010-03/erdogan-eu-beitritt-gymnasium>)



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