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Book Review

Sozialwissenschaftliche Bildung. Politik - Wirtschaft – Gesellschaft by Tim Engartner, Reinhold Hedtke, Bettina Zurstrassen. Paderborn: UTB./Ferdinand Schöningh 2021.

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The book *Sozialwissenschaftliche Bildung* is about social science education, as the title implies, but it is also a text that, viewed from outside of Germany, documents both a scientific debate and discourse as well as a tradition of teaching social sciences that is not well known or documented outside the German-speaking area. The book is described as a study-book mainly for teachers who are studying to teach social sciences, but it is also a theoretically and research-based contribution to the more theoretical debate of what education (*Bildung*) in social sciences should entail according to the authors who are all renowned professors in the areas of *Didaktik* of the social sciences. Tim Engartner is a Professor in *Didaktik der Sozialwissenschaften* at the Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt a.M. and is renowned especially for his work in the intersection of civic and economic education. Reinhold Hedtke is a senior professor in social sciences at the same university and is also well known for his long-standing work in civic and economic education. Bettina Zurstrassen is a professor in social science didactics at the University of Bielefeld and is known for her research in economic education and the importance of sociology in civic education.

In this review I will first give an introduction on the content of the book and the perspectives it offers on social science education. Afterwards I will discuss from an international/outside perspective, in my case from a Scandinavian point of view on social science education. The book is divided into 5 chapters that each have sub chapters and are of varying length. Each chapter is written by individual authors. Chapters 1-3 are a more theoretical discussion, from the “why and with what aim” the social science education in chapter one, the challenges, characteristics and context of social science education, and part 3 about the “integration instead of separation” as leitmotif for social scientific education.

Chapters 4-5 are concerned with the more practical aspects of teaching. Chapter 4 covers teaching and learning methods in social science teaching, and chapter 5 looks at the planning of social science teaching with theoretical considerations and practical inspiration.

In chapter 1 the authors explain their normative and theoretical background for social science education. From the start it is made clear that the point of departure is an understanding of the interplay between society, economy and politics, and the imperative for social sciences to address the challenges of 1) climate change, 2) increased social differentiation, 3) strengthened right-wing populism and extremism, 4) changes in the labor market/ conditions of working, 5) changes in the role of the state (p.19). These challenges and changes emphasize, according to the authors, the need for an integrative understanding of social sciences. In this context integrative means an integration between the scientific disciplines, but also between the everyday knowledge of the students and the social-scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge is not an aim in itself but must in the context of education be evaluated in terms of its relevance for education (*Bildung*) (p. 26). And the aim of education is, for the authors, as for most educators working in the German speaking area, *Mündigkeit* which can be translated as maturity but entails much more. For the authors *Mündigkeit* is both a measure of society, which entails values as freedom, equality, solidarity and sustainability, and of the educated subject who is able to act autonomously and responsibly – which again includes the ability to go against structures that restrict the individual autonomy (p.27).

The main point in chapter 2 is the need for an integration of the disciplines of economics (understood as *Volkswirtschaftslehre*), politics (political science) and sociology in a social science education (*sozialwissenschaftliche Bildung*) that combines the scientific knowledge with everyday knowledge (*Alltagswissen*) (p. 43). This ambition is not uncontested in the reality of educational policy, as the authors show with a map of Germany and a description of the differences in the school subjects in the 16 *Bundesländer*, where each state, due to the decentralisation of the German school system, has its own curriculum, and hence different subjects. In the last part of chapter 2 a special consideration is given to the problem of social inequality in social science education.

In chapter three the authors describe and discuss nine different approaches to social science education, integration instead of separation as *leitmotif*: 1) scientific orientation, 2) interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, 3) life-world orientation, 4) situation-orientation, 5) problem-orientation, 6) student-centered approach, 7) conflict-approach, 8) plurality and controversiality, and 9) action-orientation (*Handlungsorientierung*).

These approaches have similarities with the ones represented by Sybille Reinhardt in her *Teaching Civics* (2015) so they are not completely unknown in an English-language understanding of social science education.

For each approach they offer a rich theoretical clarification and some practical examples. The practical examples are, for instance, a theme such as global warming, that can be treated with an interdisciplinary approach (p.88), or they take form of

systematizing of teaching for instance as transdisciplinary analysis of key problems (p.90), progress of a role play (p.98) progress of a problem-cases study (p.105-106), progress of an analysis of conflicts (p.116). The scientific approach, as well as approaches of action-orientation and the student-centered approach are discussed on a more theoretical level.

In chapter four the authors present 10 different methodological approaches to teaching and learning in social science teaching: 1) analysis of texts, 2), pro-contra-debate, 3) *Planspiele* (simulation games), 4) learning with cartoons, 5) *Stationenlernen* (learning in stops) 6) exemplary learning through case studies, 7) classroom experiments, 8) scenarios and future-workshops, 9) excursions to companies, 10) school firms and cooperatives.

In chapter five the authors return to the more theoretical and social scientific foundations for the planning of social scientific teaching. In the chapter they focus on five aspects of the economy and the connection between economy and society: globalization, (5.1), work (5.2), social inequality (5.3), Consumption and ethics (5.4) and social market economy (*soziale Marktwirtschaft*) 5.5.

For each of these areas the authors discuss the link between the scientific foundation and discussions and the educational content. In the area of globalization the content is relevant for the students as participants in a globalized economy, but the theoretical concepts and insights from social sciences are necessary to understand and be able to take a stand on their own role in a globalized world. The education for work, or the labor market, the authors discuss and argue for teaching that not only enables the students to participate as workers, but also to critically examine and take a stand on the changing conditions of labor and the labor market. In the segment about social inequality the important relation between the content and its sensible nature – what does it mean to teach students from different social backgrounds that their background can be decisive for their success in the educational system, and that education in of itself might even enhance the social inequalities? The authors see, with reference to Hermann Giesecke, the understanding of social inequalities as necessary for an education that has the aim of being able to take care of your own interests (p. 216).

The area of consumption and ethics is also close to the world student's live in and is theoretically complex. The authors argue that consumer education should be aimed not only at learning how the market functions, but to be able to critically examine questions of consumption including their own role as consumer, in an economic and sociological light.

The social market economy to which the last segment is devoted, works as a framework for the discussion of the economy. The authors emphasize that it is important for students to understand and discuss how a social market economy can function, and the controversies surrounding the definition and content of the concept. As examples they discuss, among others, how a minimum wage functions, and how the housing market works.

All in all, this volume presents a serious approach to making the connection between theory – both the social scientific theory and educational (*Fachdidaktik*) theory – and the

practical choices teachers have to make when planning and teaching. The strength of the volume, besides its impressive foundation in research is the strong argument for an integrated understanding of politics, sociology and economy in social science education. For teachers and student teachers the book can serve as a source of knowledge on the art of social science education, as an inspiration for teacher planning, and an inspiration for discussions and reflections on the form and content of social science education. The usability of the book is enhanced by each chapter containing materials in form of boxes with examples or practical suggestions numbered M1-M70. Also each chapter ends with a list of questions serving as inspiration for thoughts and reflection.

The book will probably be read in connection with more practice-oriented works such as Sybille Reinhardt's *Politikdidaktik*, but the strength of *Sozialwissenschaftliche Bildung* lies in the theoretical discussions that are also indispensable for the teacher who wishes to act professionally. And of course, in the detailed and solid argument for an integrated approach to social science education.

From the outside of the German speaking area, this reader writing from a Danish/Scandinavian point of view, the book provides an enlightening insight into the current state of German didactics of the social sciences, especially the wish for an integration of the economic area in social sciences. In the Nordic countries the principles put forward by the authors are directly applicable even though the subjects in these countries in some form combine sociology, politics and economy in social studies (*Samfundsfag* (Denmark), *Samfunnsfag* (Norway), *Samhällskundskab* (Sweden)). It is a shame that there is not broader translation of German literature in social science education, but for those who can read German this volume is highly recommendable and can be read in conjunction with the aforementioned book by Sybille Reinhardt.

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Anders Stig Christensen, PhD is lecturer at the teacher education UCL University College in Odense, Denmark. He has published in the fields of social science education and comparative education and is scientific co-editor of the journal *Nordidactica- journal of humanities and social science education*

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