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Habitus in the classroom: the relevance of habitus, social origin, and departmental culture for learner-oriented instructional concepts for sociology.

Didaktische Strategien zum Umgang mit habitueller Vielfalt und spezifischer Fachkultur in Soziologie

The relevance of habitus, social origin and the mechanisms of exclusion as applied by the university system has often been discussed in current research. It has been stated that opportunities of students are impaired by field-of-study orientations and drop-out rates.
In contrast to this, the aspect how university teachers can practically deal with this knowledge is less elaborated. In view of this, this article presents methods of how learner-oriented approaches, with special reference to the heterogeneity of student milieus, can be implemented in teaching sociology. On the basis of reviewing theoretical approaches and recent empirical data, this article points out
a) what data are relevant for the operationalisation of learner oriented didactics,
b) what concrete problems might occur in the teacher-student-relationship and
c) what techniques are to be applied by sociology teachers in handling classroom problems.
The results demonstrate that teaching methods which adequately respond to heterogeneity within the culture of sociology departments are imperative and available. Still, to establish equal opportunities, a more practical turn in a hitherto predominantly theoretical discussion is clearly needed.

Chancenungleichheit durch Passungsdifferenzen unterschiedlicher sozialer Milieus zum Hochschulsystem ist schon häufig theoretisch diskutiert worden. Zudem geben empirische Untersuchungen detaillierte Einblicke in studentische Milieus und Fachkulturen. Bei der Literaturrezeption entsteht der Eindruck, eine didaktische Reaktion auf das Problem der hochschulinternen Exklusionsmechanismen könnte nicht dringend genug sein. Die Konzeption entsprechender didaktischen Ansätze wird aber wenig thematisiert. Dieser Artikel hat den Anspruch, konkrete Umsetzungsmöglichkeiten von lernerzentrierten didaktischen Ansätzen im Fach Soziologie aufzuzeigen. In einem Fach, das grundsätzlich sensibel für Ungleichheiten ist, fehlen trotzdem heterogenitätsorientierte Gestaltungskonzepte. Der vorliegende Aufsatz will diese Lücke schließen und beantworten
a) welche der Informationen über studentische Milieus relevant für die Konzeption einer lernerzentrierten Didaktik ist,
b) welche konkreten Passungsprobleme sich in Lehr-Lern-Settings ergeben könnten und
c) mit welchen Methoden diesen Problemen begegnet werden kann.
Die Ergebnisse zeigen nicht nur, dass eine heterogenitätssensible, lernerbezogene Didaktik bereits jetzt methodisch möglich ist.

The heterogeneity of student milieus is highly significant for the development of didactic concepts. Especially in university teaching, intercourse with students from different social milieus and, therefore, different abilities for coping with the academic world is a challenge for teachers.

Over decades, student enrolments at German universities have been rising continuously (Avenarius et al. 2006, 105), and it is to be expected that more young people from non-academic homes and backgrounds will make their way into academic education.

These new cohorts of university students do differ considerably in terms of social data and social behaviours, such as secondary education degrees, or parental social status, or conversational and economic cultures in the family household. The widespread image of the standard student and of a homogeneous learning site called university does not correspond to the real situation (Tones et al. 2009). This discrepancy between image and reality may account for some didactic concepts, even ambitious ones, being not very successful.ocial milieus are decisive not only regarding the question whether to go to university or not - and if yes, what field to chose. It is the habitus together with the specific culture of the chosen academic department - that determines, to a considerable degree, the student's behaviour and the "academic equipment" (Viebahn 2008, 55; all translations from German by K. L.) relevant for student careers at the

university. In German research on attitudes and social origins of university students, Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction and his concept of habitus are widely used (Georg 2005, 2009).

This paper generally assumes the validity of Bourdieu's theory. At the same time, though, it should be noted that the academic field in Germany does only little have in common with the strong exclusivity of the French educational system as depicted by Bourdieu in the 70s of last century. There are various reasons for this. For one, German universities, in the wake of the 'educational expansion', have been attracting students from milieus without notable academic traditions. Also, in Germany there are no elite institutions of research and learning up to now. However, tertiary education in Germany is covered by full universities, universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen), and vocational academies (Berufsakademien). Finally, academic faculties in Germany are far less homogeneous than they are in France; however, as Hartmann 2002 points out, there has no reliable research been carried out on this question. Due to the formalised and 'democratised' procedures of recruiting university teachers, a selection along lines of habitus and familiarisation in traditional insider milieus (Hartmann 2002) is barely possible, at least officially.

Bourdieu's theoretical framework is characterised by operating on the basis of two central assumptions. First, it is assumed that students from academic milieus are more performance-oriented and more likely to receive intellectual and financial support than students from other groups. Second, there exists a field-specific and even department-specific habitus, which assigns students, in line with their socialisation, to accustomed cultural structures, and which is instrumental to students' success or failure.

In Bourdieu's theory, the education of the individual in the family is considered to mirror - and reproduce – the stratification of society. Beck's notion of individualisation, on the other hand, suggests that individual interests affect decisions as the choice of study field, and even department, to a much higher degree than class-specific conditioning.

However, this individualistic perspective cannot explain the interrelation of social origin and choice of field of study, as substantiated by Georg (2005). In contrast to other theoretical approaches relating to processes of socialisation, Bourdieu's concept offers the possibility to explain, for instance, the high estimation, in many societies, of certain fields of study (symbolic capital) which at the same time obviously and traditionally are 'occupied' by students from certain social milieus.

It follows that professional university teaching must be geared, as far as possible, to different habitus groups and habitus situations in the classroom. This will facilitate learning endeavours and academic adaptation processes of those who are not acquainted with the intricacies of academia. The success of such learner-oriented, differentiated ways of teaching has been demonstrated recently (Santangelo, Tomlinson 2009).

Also, university teachers must be aware of different departmental cultures (Schölling 2005; Bargel et al. 2001). Teachers of sociology, for instance, must have in mind not only their field or department, sociology, and the special learning and teaching culture of that department, but must at the same time be attentive to various other departmental cultures. Many participants in sociology lectures or seminars are not majoring sociologists and bring along their department's or school's particular teaching and learning culture.

Unfortunately, today there exist only few tangible data on habitus, social origin, and departmental culture of sociology students. However, there is some material on students of the social sciences. In most cases, this heading comprises students of sociology as well as, e.g., students of social work.

Despite the comprehensive usage of the term social sciences, in this contribution, pertaining mainly to sociology, I will have to refer to research into the behaviour of students of the social sciences. This article attempts to provide answers to three questions:
–   What are the central issues of milieu and learning heterogeneity at the university (with special reference to sociology/ social sciences)?
–   What are some important characteristic features of sociology students, and what criteria for curricular planning and for student success may be derived from such features?
–   What is the strategy for teaching sociology to be adopted in face of student heterogeneity?

1.   Heterogeneity at the University: Central Issues

In general, the prevailing culture of a university department is informed by one social milieu only. Differences as to habitus lead to differences as to choice of department. Social milieus are certainly not equally represented in the single department; rather, one milieu prevails. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the social milieu and the habitus of students determine their orientations and learning approaches at university. Their learning successes or failures, their feeling of being welcome or displaced in the seminar, their good or not-so-good relationship to the teachers: all this depends on if, and to what degree, their habitus was formed by everyday references to academia and to the subject field that later became their departmental choice (Bourdieu, Passeron 1971, p. 31). Thus, the choice of the field of study already is strongly influenced by students' social, or 'home', milieus; and this early choice affects, in many ways, their learning

attitudes, their success or non-success, at the university. And again, the symbolic capital of fields of study, or schools and departments, clearly corresponds to the social origins of those schools' students. According to Bourdieu/ Passeron 1971, the schools of medicine and law, the most prestigious at French universities, were frequented by students from the country's wealthier families and families with an academic background. Less esteemed subject fields, like the humanities, the social sciences, or educational studies, were chosen, by and large, by students from social milieus without or little academic traditions. The findings of Bourdieu have been corroborated by German scholars according to the German university system (u.a. Köhler 1992). Markus Schölling (2005) shows that persons wanting to go to university chose their field of study on the basis of the kind of "capital" acquired in the family home (Bourdieu 2005, see also similarly Engler 1993, Bülow-Schramm/ Gerlof 2004). Andrea Lange-Vester and Christel Teiwes-Kügler (2004) identify mechanisms in the choice of the field-of-study which are based on rational decisions only at a low level; in many cases, these mechanisms follow from peculiarities of social groups that are not traditionally acquainted with academic education. The interaction between teachers and students conceals "(often implicitly) 'coded messages', which are accessible to the persons involved in various ways. Social selectivity, hence, is the result of such subtle, often clandestine mechanisms" (Bremer 2006, 290).

Today, it is mostly in the social sciences that students are highly heterogeneous. The male, determined, fulltime student from the respectable middle class family (Huber 1985) has had, for some time now, competitors from other social quarters. As Bourdieu found out already in the 70s, it is in the social sciences that social origin, habitus, and departmental culture are a challenge to teachers. Compared to medical and law students, social science students come to a much higher degree from milieus that are only scarcely acquainted with academic traditions (Bargel, Ramm, Multrus 2001; Schölling 2005). Such academic upstarts are especially attracted by social sciences and economics (Schölling 2005). Parents of these newcomers, in comparison with parents of other groups, often have not very high-ranked school certificates and only a few have an academic education. The question why social origin not only affects the decision to attend university but also influences the choice of the school or department, has been discussed by scholars in Germany as early as in the mid-60s (cf., i. a., Dahrendorf 1965). The answer to this question is to be found in what may be called the congruence of habitus and field: "Hidden mechanisms" (Bourdieu 2005) direct students who are less privileged into less reputable study areas such as the social sciences (Lange-Vester, Teiwes-Kügler 2004, 162).

Not only the social origin of students is decisive for their academic orientation, but it also guides their teachers' assessment of student performance. The assessment of students from the lower middle class, by French professors, reflects the "upper class image of the petty bourgeois" (Bourdieu 1988, p. 359). The professors' dismissive and obviously paradox qualification of lower middle class students as "too scholastic" (ibid., p. 367) can often be found in statements concerning supposedly lower class milieus. Conversely, Bourdieu adds, positive evaluations of student work as well as high grading marks are given if these students belong to upper middle class groups (ibid.).

Arguably, there is a risk of university education reproducing just one and the same class – the upper middle class. Teachers, it may be said, tend to evaluate students not on a mere factual basis, but rather from a perspective that is framed by their own social origins. They formulate evaluations which "rank individual persons first in terms of departmental categories, then in terms of social classes" (Bourdieu 1988, 370). Thus, their evaluation is a veiled social judgement, or a euphemism. The fatal result is that this judgement, in its "misleading form" (Bourdieu 1988, 371), is accepted by students who then withdraw into self-exclusion and finally may drop out. It is the task of university teachers and university didactics to realise such mechanisms and to prevent them as far as possible.

To sum up: the conceptual considerations of the present paper, based on Bourdieu's notion of habitus, are underpinned by the psychological and pedagogical assumption that education is fully successful only if learners can settle in an environment that fully meets their habitus-based needs (Viehbahn 2008, 29).

2. Habitus, Characteristic Features of Students, and Departmental Cultures in the Social Sciences

In this section of my paper, I will list research data relevant to the learning success of students – with special reference to habitus, characteristic features of students, and departmental cultures in the social sciences.

Social science students belong to a "definitely heterogeneous group" (Lange-Vester/ Teiwes-Kügler 2004, 168). On the other hand, the 18th Social Inquiry of the German National Association for Student Affairs stresses the priority of lower middle class students in the group made up of social science, social work, pedagogy, and psychology (Isserstedt et al. 2007, 140). These different fields of study, again, differ considerably as to milieu origin. The inquiry shows that students of lower class social milieus are represented to a disproportionately high percentage

in social work and social pedagogy (ibid., 142). It does not elaborate the social background of sociology students.

The constraint of learning success, by means of habitus barriers, leads to what has been called "self-elimination" (Lange-Vester, Teiwes-Kügler 2004, 180). Primarily, this affects those who lack a traditionally academic background. They do not master the language of academia, they are not really at ease with middle class cultural heritages, and they cannot rely on academic experiences in their families; consequently, they resign and withdraw into unassuming environments like sports or side jobs (ibid., 181). In contrast to this group, there is the milieu of the "exclusive" and the "competence and performance"-oriented students. They come from (upper) middle class homes; they ask for exclusiveness, high standards, and discipline; they are inclined to make high demands to university programmes (ibid., pp 170). This latter group benefits from social science programmes which are little structured (Bremer 2006, 302). On the other hand, the group of the alienated students, who lack family milieus supporting self-guided study, could be accommodated with more formalised programmes.

In general, problems of communication between learners and teachers may result from the common practice of teachers not "to nurture [...] the academic personality, but to take it for granted" (ibid., 302; omission: K.L.). According to the Schölling research report on student ways of life, students of the social sciences, together with students of pedagogy and psychology, come from families trying to rise to an educated middle class status. This background, in student behaviour, shows as learning zeal, financial stringency, and striving for self-fulfilment. As Schölling points out – and this is most important for teachers – the lack of an academic tradition in the families of these students accounts for the inclination of students to transform superficial knowledge into what he calls "striving for entirety and perfection" (Schölling 2005, 81).

The Schölling report also shows that social science students pursue the academic program as a "way of life" (ibid., 74). Unlike other student groups, social science students hardly separate study time from spare time, or public life from private life. This may explain the not very formalised conduct of social science students. It may also explain the often not strictly hierarchical relations between teachers and students of those fields of study (ibid., 79). It should be taken into consideration when designing courses targeted to specific audiences.

As to political attitudes, Bargel states that students of the social sciences and the humanities, as well as pedagogy students, tend to show "critical" and "alternative", or "idealistic" and "solidary", attitudes

to a higher extent than other student groups (Bargel 2000, 15). Another interesting comparison concerns the identification of different student groups with their fields of study. Among the identification indicators established by Bargel are "commitment" and "adherence" to the chosen field of study (ibid., 3). If commitment and adherence levels are high, students may develop a sense of security. In general, the social science student's identification level is moderate. In his survey, Bargel asked students of different fields if they had been resolved, right from the start, to go to university. Of all the cohorts who, in the various fields of study, answered in the affirmative, the one in the social sciences and humanities was the smallest (Bargel et al. 2001, pp 64). Furthermore, only 67 percent of the social science students would chose their field of study a second time. In contrast, medical students scored 79 percent on the same item (ibid., 102).

The academic insecurities of social science students may be explained, with Bourdieu, in looking at their background milieus: at the lack of an academic culture, and, hence, at habitual feelings of not really belonging to academia. Conversely, as Bargel states, "a high degree of social reputation, in terms of education and profession, corresponds to a high degree of 'academic self-assurance', and a high-ranked milieu saves students from taking up distracting side jobs and provides them with an optimistic perspective of their future" (Bargel 2000, 4). As opposed to this, only 59 percent of social science students rated themselves as full-time students, respondents from other fields achieving clearly higher percentages (Bargel et al. 2001, 92). This result, as far as social science students are concerned, may hint to side job activities and to the shifting of central interests to non-academic engagements, i.e. in sports and other leisure-time groups. In fact, the 18th Social Survey of the German Students Agency states that 67 percent of all students of social sciences (including social work) at German universities do have part-time jobs (Isserstedt et al. 2007, 333).

It is possible that this high proportion of side-jobbing relates to the "below-average weekly time involved in studying" (ibid., 282) on the part of social science students. In any case, teachers should note that, according to Isserstedt's findings published in 2007, social science students are accustomed to spend not more than 15 hours weekly for attending courses; the same amount of time is spent for self-study (ibid., 284).

It must be mentioned at this point that social science students, in warding off the introduction of more pre-set study programs, often claim to be heavily involved in self-study because of the comprehensive contents of the subject matter. This claim is barely tenable. The Isserstedt survey shows that, concerning the rate of self-study, social science/social work (including pedagogy) students are outdone by stu-

dents of all other fields (ibid., 284). These latter students, at the same time, do reach a course attendance rate which is at least as high as that of the social science students. The Isserstedt survey also provides results on the relative distribution of health disorders. 21 percent of the interviewed social science, pedagogy, and psychology students declare to have health problems. Out of this group, 48 percent state that such problems affect their academic studies. In contrast, only 16 percent of the interviewed medical and law students report health problems.

All in all, some of the characteristic features of social science students, as outlined above, seem to indicate that many of these students perceive of their studies as straining or burdening. Relevant figures are provided by Schölling 2005. This survey operates with "stress clusters" which are composed, for instance, of the parameters "disorientation" and "individual strain". Within the group of strongly strained students, the largest sub-group, with a percentage of 44, is that of the social science students (ibid., 252).

A clear indicator of little or no congruence between students and their academic environment is the share in "dropouts". In the social sciences, the dropouts are commonplace. According to Schölling 36 out of 100 social science students dropped out in 2002. Only 10 percent of the medical students, who are often used to academic tradition, dropped out. In the social sciences, „misguided expectations about the chosen field of study" (Heublein et al. 2005, 19) account, to a high degree, for the drop-out rate. In addition, diffuse notions about the prospective job situation promote voluntary and early withdrawals from academic study. Many students in social science/ social work switch from this field into other fields of study. Switching students and dropouts together, in social science/ social work, reach 68 percent; of these, 32 percent switch to other fields, and 36 percent, as stated above, are dropouts (ibid., 26).

These results correspond to what Tino Bargel et al. (2001) have termed the low-grade identification of social science students with their fields of study. It is deplorable that Heublein, like Bargel, do not specifically refer to sociology as a well-defined field of study. Instead, sociology is dissipated in composite social science programs and in social work studies.

3. Student Heterogeneity and the Strategy for Teaching Sociology

Mixed social origins: farewell to the traditional student

The fact that the traditional student does not exist any longer must be realised, in particular, by social science teachers. In contrast to law and medicine faculties, social science teachers do not in general interact with students who from the start, by virtue of their social origin, are acquainted with academic co-

des of language and behaviour – and who quite often are even versed in institutional mechanisms and details of study programmes. Thus it appears that the milieu heterogeneity at social science departments may result in conflicts between teachers and students. Such conflicts would concern, for instance, the perception and the adequacy of academic requirements. To minimise these conflicts, a split shall be suggested, distributing the course content to several different packages geared to different 'habitus worlds', such as the 'free intellectuals' and the 'academic newcomers'.

Teachers must be ready to handle different learning milieus right from the start of student careers at the university. Such habitus awareness and such early monitoring will save the more insecure, non-traditional students from being erroneously classified as mere 'special cases'. It should be stressed, then, that it is necessary for social science teachers to reconsider their perception of 'the' student. For instance, teachers tend to assume that first-term students are able, more or less, to enunciate a problem in terms of scholarly research. Students failing to do so may risk being dismissed as unsuitable for study or lacking creative potential. However, the craft of thinking and writing related to academic research can and must be aquired. To some degree, this learning process may take place in instruction units specialising in basics of methodology. Essentially, it must clearly and systematically be integrated into regular courses, lectures, and seminars.

Helping students to identify with their field of study

Many social science students have decided for their field of study, e. g. sociology, rather short-dated. They also have been considering other choices, such as an apprenticeship. In view of this shaky starting situation, and in view of the high dropout rate in the social sciences, teachers in that area must be prepared to continuously encourage and support their students. It would not be feasible, however, to establish regular counselling services. The workload of teachers would not allow for additional duties. Instead, teaching and learning ought to be structured from an early stage in a way that students would be encouraged to rely on and bring forward the knowledge and the ideas which, at any given time, are at their disposal.

Superficial knowledge turned into striving for perfection; political idealism

Schölling has pointed to social science students being inclined, for lack of academic milieus, to transform superficial knowledge into "striving for entirety and perfection" (Schölling 2005, 81). Teachers should be aware of this inclination. It may, at least partially, account for the social sciences often being dubbed contemptuously, in public, as 'science of platitudes'. As Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron have stated, "in the social sciences, in literature, and in philo-

sophy it is particularly difficult to keep apart big-talking on the one hand and scholarly discourse on the other hand, since there is little chance to un-mask knowledge that has been acquired from hearsay only" (Bourdieu, Passeron 1971, 65). In view of this somewhat dubious aspect of the social sciences, tea-chers must be prepared to over and over again remind these students of the ways and rules of scholarly pur-suits. Let us keep in mind that sociology, while using methods of empirical social research, as a 'pure' science, operates with high precision in methods and terminology. This precision must be fully accepted as indispensable framework and strict guidance for the scientific sociological discourse. The same holds true regarding political attitudes of social science stu-dents. They must endeavour to clearly differentiate between mere opinions and scholarly statements; they must keep reviewing their written and spoken comments in terms of the reasoning framework of so-ciology. At the same time, of course, sociology tea-chers must refrain from suggesting that political involvement would be undesirable or even beyond scholarly exploration.

Being a student as a way of life

Social science students barely separate study time from time off, or public space from private space. This may explain the flat hierarchies prevailing at social science institutes; it may also explain student beha-viour prevailing in the seminar, a behaviour which in general is thought of as rather informal and which might even be mistaken as absence of academic se-riousness. To avoid problems, teachers could take into account the student's habitus background. In any case, teachers must be ready to accept their classroom position as significantly deviating from that of the high school teacher who was a figure of institutional authority and dignity. University teachers, if they are not aware of this 'authority gap', may experience pro-blems of status and authenticity (Koller 1997).

Extensive part-time work, low study-load

In this paper it is assumed that, in the case of so-cial science students, there exists a close interrela-tionship between social origin, the employment rate and the low rate of time devoted to studying. In view of the low time budget for courses, social science tea-chers may be tempted to hand out comprehensive reading assignments or to set up project groups in ad-dition to regular courses. They will not be very succes-sful: they will come up against the side-job barrier. Can teachers, taking into account this obstacle, exact higher workloads from students? Or, conversely, is it the poor curricular guidance of students that allows for ample part-time work in the first place? Motives of students for part-time work have been investigated by Isserstedt et al. One of their findings is that "the lo-wer the social origin and the educational background, the higher the motivation for securing the 'means of

subsistence'" (2007, 339). In view of the fact that a re-latively high number of social science students come from lower class milieus, it can be assumed that the relatively high rate of part-time work seems to be cau-sed by the necessity of fending for themselves. Lower class students appear to prefer side jobs to other sub-sistence means – state loans, parental support, or scholarships. Social science teachers, in the end, must live with the sobering certainty that in many cases the time investment they may claim from their stu-dents will be limited indeed.

The teachers: habitus and teaching skills

In general, if research on academic learning and didactics addresses questions of milieu and habitus, the focus is on student milieu and student habitus. Only occasionally such questions are raised with re-gard to academic teachers and problems concerning to what extend they are in line with the departmental culture. One of the few relevant publications is Kol-ler's article, from 1997, entitled "How do prospective academic teachers learn to teach?" Koller is interested in connections between biographical backgrounds and teaching skills. On the basis of information gai-ned from beginning teachers, about problems and dif-ficulties in the teaching business, he identifies teachers who are "contented" against those who are "discontented" (Koller 1997, 65). Such differences in communicating with students are related by Koller to experiences of these teachers with their own teachers back in high school times.

As Koller points out, the contentment of teachers is primarily built up by positively taking on the new responsibilities coming along with teaching. Koller al-so points to the high demand of universities for fur-ther education in didactics. He emphasises that most beneficial for the contentment of teachers is their fre-quent communication with colleagues on the expe-riences of teaching. According to Koller's findings, contented teachers ascribe their positive attitude mainly to exchange of opinions and to support in connection with supervised teaching, teaching in-ternships, or thematic meetings with colleagues. The Koller research clearly demonstrates that the orienta-tion of teachers towards flexible and habitus-cons-cious teaching concepts will not work without systematic support of relevant institutions.

4. Suggestions for social science in-struction

Much has been written, in the last decades, on prob-lems of inequality related to university access in gen-eral. Less attention, it seems, has been paid to tangible proposals and attempts which aim at reduc-ing disadvantages and at advancing the equality of opportunities in academia. Bourdieu/Passeron, in their "Plea for a rational academic instruction", re-mind us that official efforts to establish equal oppor-

tunities for all students would remain "on a merely formal level unless inequality is tackled, substantially, with instructional approaches and activities actions" (1971, S. 84).

The possibilities of individual teachers, however, for contributing to such activities actions seem limited. On the whole, they will not be able to influence, to a great extent, the wider societal and academic context shaping the relationship between learners and the learning environment. What they can do, is provide well-prepared packages of didactic support which would improve the learning process in the single classroom.

Of course, departments and students must join teachers in improving the learning process. As to sociology departments, it is strongly to be recommended that they conduct research surveys which focus specifically on sociology. This would enable departments, in resorting to the milieu data of their 'own' students, to devise customised strategies and programmes of teaching and learning. It would be possible then, already in early steps of curriculum construction, to establish programmes geared to various habitus groups. Teachers and departmental procedures cannot be expected, however, to totally be adapted to the needs of students. Viebahn, in his study on the "varieties of learners", points out that a flexible structuring of study programmes for persons in employment certainly does not exempt these persons "from setting up and strictly observing a particularly precise schedule for courses and times of self-study" (Viebahn 2008, 25).

In the following some suggestions will be presented for curriculum work at university. These suggestions, despite limitations as to time and space, would allow for flexibility in teaching and learning. To begin with, there is a concept of teaching as adapted to different learner groups (Neber 1996). The overall aims of this concept are as follows:
1. Instructions and directives of teachers are conform to aptitudes and abilities of students.
2. Learning materials are geared to different learning groups; this will provide the chance, for every single student, to meet pre-set learning objectives.
3. Teachers give feedback to learners on progress achieved.
4. Students participate in curriculum planning.
5. "Alternative ways of learning are allowed for; alternative materials are provided" (Neber 1966, p. 404).

These objectives will become more comprehensible if brought into relation with methods for learner-oriented teaching as suggested by Viebahn. One of these methods, recommended by Viebahn especially for groups made up of students with heterogeneous backgrounds, is learning in project teams. The project team is directed by students as they themselves choose the subject-matter to be dealt with from areas directly pertaining to their social milieus. Also, it is left to students to decide on research methods, materials, and ways of presentation; and clear learning objectives are framed by students themselves (Viebahn 2008, 52). It should be added, however, that learning in project teams may be suitable to the free intellectual more than to the educationally insecure type of student as identified above.

A helpful instrument for flexible teaching and individualised evaluation of progress is the 'student logbook'. After each seminar session students note down the theme of that session, results of discussions, and remarks as to progress made or not made. The logbook helps teachers, in attempting to evaluate students, to pinpoint causes of differences in performance. Moreover, the student logbook keeps up a seminar framework which is binding for all participants but also allows for individual deviations. To some advanced students the logbook may even serve as first draft of a seminar paper or other research work. Teachers can easily refer to logbooks to be kept up-to-date on the current level of learning progress.

Another useful way of furthering self-study is the jigsaw method. Learning objectives are formulated and the learning matter is divided into smaller areas which are assigned to expert groups. For the presentation of results, new groups are formed. Each student has the opportunity to function as an expert, to learn from other experts, and to present expert results.

As a rule, the diversity of students should entail the diversity of methods and instructions. Teachers should apply various methods of teaching, and they should suggest various methods for students to employ in papers and presentations. Due to the large number of participants in seminars, presentations by students often are regarded to be the only way of organising the seminar. As presenters, however, students must in a way support the teacher in running the seminar. In presenting their paper, they take on the task of conveying the subject-matter of the seminar to their fellow students. For some presenters, especially those from non-academic milieus, this task may seem to be frightening. Positive feedback from the audience is helpful and should be encouraged by teachers. Several handbooks and articles on didactics elaborate on the function and importance of feedback (Bruppacher 2006; Preiser 1995).

For teachers, one of the most intricate aspects of coping with heterogeneity in the classroom is the assessment of student performance. Different social dispositions must be taken into consideration. Individual progress must be recognised, with a view to milieu obstacles which the student may be trying to overcome. Hence, when dealing with assessments

and examinations, teachers should proceed with increased sensitivity. It should be avoided to subject "examinees who are basically unequal to exams which supposedly are applicable to everyone" (Bourdieu, Passseron 1971, 84). Viebahn suggests that if departments want to respond to heterogeneity, they should „conduct a small number of exams which are on a high diagnostic level and which are compulsory for all students" , while in addition, there should be frequent optional exams for those wishing to improve grades received in the compulsory exams (Viebahn 2008, 80).

Frequent check-ups on progress of learning would provide security to low-achieving students and confirm those with a high performance. It is advisable to employ special tests for measuring performance in comprehending issues of a highly theoretical nature like sociology. The student logbook, and special minutes of the seminar session, will meet the interests of both the less and the more advanced students (ibid., p. 79). "Complex oral tests" (Viebahn 2008, 80) could be offered, from time to time, to advanced and well performing students. This might help them avoid feelings of frustration.

In addition to this flexible grading system, students might be encouraged to publish outstanding articles, possibly in journals or anthologies, and teachers might assist in establishing relevant contacts. Activities of this kind will provide students with early insights into professional work related to academic education.

As to the criteria of evaluating student performance, they must be made public and the underlying concept must be open to criticism. One essay on grading criteria, highlighting the importance of media usage while omitting criteria like rules of research, style, and citation (Cocard 2006, 163), may serve as an example for questionable subjectivity in grading. Another point in this context: when evaluating student work, teachers must be aware of different language levels. They should consider to avoid giving better grades to students who by reason of social origin already are acquainted, to some degree, with the academic language.

With a view to student heterogeneity, the criteria of performance should be kept open to variations – even if at first sight this sounds not very practicable (Viebahn 2008, 109). Planning the concept of instruction will be restricted by institutional time allotments for courses and by conceding reasonable workloads to students. There will be some room, though, for scheduling work phases and dates for submitting research papers. Teachers should allow for different phases and deadlines according to individual work designs. Within the pre-set deadline schedule, more pragmatic students may deliver short and formalised papers, whereas students with more cultural capital may come up with their first own empirical research report.

To sum up, this paper relates the concept of milieu and habitus heterogeneity to teaching social sciences at university level. A number of didactic methods are suggested to be practised in the classroom by the interested teacher. Building on these suggestions, teachers may wish to seek further possibilities of adequately and reasonably dealing with concepts of learner-oriented concepts. Lastly, and with a brief outlook on the Bologna reforms, it should be noted that certain effects of these reforms will be significant for the further development of learner-oriented didactics based on the habitus concept. In particular, we may be hopeful for Bologna to help reduce drop-out rates at European universities. Student groups with a tendency for higher drop-out rates often come from social layers which are not or only scarcely academically oriented (Georg 2009, 656). At the same time these students tend to gather in the more 'free' and traditionally less structured language or cultural subjects where drop-out-rates, with 45%, are the highest among academic departments (Heublein, Schmelzer, Sommer 2005). And since these students do not really represent the 'free intellectual' type of student but rather are kept busy with handling the unwonted intricacies of university life, it might be possible for them to profit from the Bologna scheme of "more school into university". The new European-wide ground-level grade, the B.A., is manageable within the prescribed time-spans; it does not take much longer than the 3-years "vocational education" in Germany; it encourages an objective-oriented learning organisation. It lowers the risk of getting entangled in sundry side activities, as described above, on the long and tedious way to far-away examinations at the traditional academia. Thus, more manageability, structuring, and transparency, might lead in the long run to lowering European university drop-out rates. Although, until now, no significant effect of the BA/MA system on the lowering of drop-out rates could be stated (Horstschräer/ Sprietsma 2010), the revised structures of examinations give reason for cautious optimism – if we look, as suggested in this paper, not at university students as an abstract totality, but at different student groups and various types of learners.

Of course, new university structures will not release teachers from their responsibilities towards students. If, by means of reduced drop-out rates, student heterogeneity will grow, then learner-oriented didactics and the overall improvement of teaching methods will gain more significance as well.

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