



## Key Concepts in Education: Critical Issues beyond Definition and Discursive Practices

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### Abstract

*Along with the processes of digitization, medialization and the globalization of communications and lifeworlds, new topics, subject matters, conceptualizations and methods have been developed in educational research and practice. On the one hand, from a diachronic perspective we can notice how new aspects of education (Bildung), upbringing (Erziehung), learning and communication have been addressed. On the other hand, from a synchronic perspective we can see a simultaneity of the non-simultaneous in terms of understandings, approaches, methodologies and forms of mediation and collaboration. Although more and more open initiatives and open educational resources (OER), as well as international collaborations and transnational intellectual networks, are being brought forward, epistemological aspects about using different key concepts are widely underestimated. The paper starts with: (1) an outline of selected understandings of education and literacy, followed by (2) a discussion of critical epistemological aspects by way of contrasting and correlating conceptual dimensions. Lastly, the contribution aims at (3) a sketch of polylogical design principles for educational knowledge organization.*

**Keywords:** Blended learning, dialogue, social system, reflecting upon practices, cooperative learning, videotaped meeting

### Introduction

Generally speaking, many would agree that new topics, subject matters, conceptualizations and methods have been developed in educational research and practice along with processes of digitization, medialization and the globalization of communications and lifeworlds. If asked for relevant examples, some would point to e-learning practices and the introduction of computers or mobile devices in schools; others would foreground aspects of new learning cultures or the role of media in life-long, life-wide or life-deep learning, while others again would put their fingers on e-inclusion policies, positive chances for a desirable future of learning or problematic aspects such as mental enfeeblement or "flickering minds" (Oppenheimer, 2003). As soon as we take a closer look, we discover a multitude of loosely or not at all connected approaches, concepts, methodologies and opinions. Some of them

are widely accepted or at least discussed, whereas some are relevant only to small groups or even just to individuals.

The scope of this simultaneity of the asynchrony of various understandings, conceptualizations and modes of foregrounding themes and problems, as well as approaches to solving them, is commonly undervalued. Indeed, one might say that in view of the multitudinous heterogeneity, strategies of ignorance are necessary in order to be able to work on certain issues. This argument can easily be strengthened by pointing to contrary if not contradictory basic positions such as widespread taken-for-granted ways of talking about "social media" or "new media", as opposed to the argument that "there are no new media" (cf. Geoghegan, 2005).

- Moreover, there seems to be no reasonable chance of achieving even partial connections if we realize the far-reaching consequences of basic decisions as related to, e.g.:
- different epistemological horizons of reflection in the wake of pictorial turn(s), cultural turn(s), mediatic turn(s), etc.;
- various descriptions of generally relevant societal dynamics and diagnoses of "the" times;
- conceptual, methodological and technical frames of framing issues, as well as ways of dealing with problems of terminology and translation;
- communicative, academic and intellectual styles (cf. Galtung, 1985; Thiel/Rost, 2001);
- interpretations of academic freedom and institutional peculiarities.

Then again, it seems that there are too many centrifugal forces at work, and too many of them in self-sufficient and not very thoughtful ways. However, it has long been impossible to read all important publications on a subject, and there is no end or limitation of academic paper production in sight. Quite the contrary, more and more journals are available, immense amounts of online documents are being published, and books and e-readers are on sale as never before. In view of the ongoing production of different forms of knowledge and information dynamics, developing both general and specific concepts of academic information entropy has become quite a challenging task.

In this paper, I am going to outline some critical issues concerning key concepts in education such as education and literacy and considerations beyond definition and discursive practices in search of viable solutions for middle courses between lopsided approaches, implicitly absolutized positions or mutual ignorance on the one hand, and epistemological hopelessness or indifference, arbitrary selection or the invocation of "difference" on the other.

## **Education and Literacy as Key Concepts in Education**

If we consult handbooks and introductions to educational studies, we can quickly establish that: (a) they contain different terms even if their scope is similar, (b) they do not give the same attention to these terms and (c) specific concepts go through historical cycles of usage. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s terms such as socialization, qualification, development and learning moved to the centre of the German-speaking educational discourses. Roughly 130 years earlier, in the introduction to *Umriss pädagogischer Vorlesungen* (1841), Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) emphasized two aspects that are relevant for the determination of the study of pedagogy: §1, "The basic concept of pedagogy is the educationability [*Bildsamkeit*] of the student," and §2, "Pedagogy as a science depends on practical philosophy and psychology. The

former indicates the aim of education, the latter the route, means and obstacles" (Herbart 1841, p. 1). Elsewhere, Herbart discusses terms such as "variety of interest" or "moral strength of character" as fundamental ideas, and combines the concepts of "education" and "teaching" in the compound "educational teaching" (cf. Herbart, 1806). He became known not least because he demanded to focus on basic concepts that are "native" (that is, original or endemic to the discipline) and gave the following reasons:

It would arguably be better if pedagogy remembered its endemic [*einheimisch*] concepts as accurately as possible and made an effort to cultivate independent thinking, whereby it would become the center of a research sphere and avoid the risk of being governed by a stranger as a distant, conquered province. (Herbart, 1806, p. 8)

More than 200 years later, the situation has become a lot more complex, and partial or extensive "claims to government" in educational matters not only come from state, economic or ecclesiastic powers, but also from media institutions. Moreover, the scope of issues has been expanded beyond foci related to teaching, and now includes diverse extra-mural topics and the entire curriculum vitae. The field of related disciplines has also widened considerably so that, aside from philosophy, psychology and sociology, in recent times cybernetics, information technology, cognitive sciences, biology and neurosciences have come to play a very prominent role in some areas. In addition to that, we can observe tendencies toward the Europeanization and internationalization of the education system, in addition to dynamics of individualization, globalization, medialization and mobilization that are highly relevant not only in societal contexts and to our system of education, but also to scientific systems and particularly to educational science itself.<sup>i</sup>

Besides, if we become aware of the challenges and interrelated problems of the kind connected to such topics as demographic change, media convergence, knowledge-based economy, new work order, climate change, energy supply or environmental and security policy, we will quickly realize that the communication about the educational dimensions of these interrelations is by far not limited to the proper translation of terminologies, which by itself often seems an unsolvable problem.<sup>ii</sup>

While the term "competence" is frequently used in the German-speaking area today in regard to aspects of education theory and practical pedagogy that are related to these challenges, on the international level the use of "literality" is more common. As in the case of the many different concepts of education, the competence debates also contain greatly differing basic understandings (see for example Elliot & Dweck, 2005; Erpenbeck & von Rosenstiel, 2007). Looking at the term "literacy", the situation is similar (see for example Street & Lefstein, 2007; Olson & Torrance, 2009).<sup>iii</sup> It has been fashionable for a while to generate new concepts of literality and literacy, transfer them to various areas and apply them in metaphorical ways (cf. Gee, 1999; Leu, 1999; Sting, 2003). Many descriptions of new literacies are pragmatically motivated and many are kept very simple (cf. Sheridan, 2000), whereas others are quite differentiated (Richardson et al., 2009) and clearly focused (cf. Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2009). But it is not only the variety of different conceptualizations and the multitude of compound terms that invite a review of discursive developments. It is also the fact that different terms are sometimes used for similar phenomena, that unclear or hidden meanings are at work and that epistemological shortcomings are often underestimated. Large parts of concurrent discourses on literacies, and especially on visual literacy (cf. Hug, 2011), seem rather odd and restricted to the thinking of the linguistic turn. But these days, dealing with the methodological and epistemological challenges linked with the pictorial turn (Mitchell, 1994) and the iconic turn (Boehm, 1994, p. 13f) is long overdue. Moreover, also in view of

discourses on one or several mediatic turns (cf. Margreiter, 1999; Friesen/Hug, 2009; Hug, 2009) and the digital turn (cf. Kossek/Peschl, 2012), it is about time for considerations beyond literacies (cf. Hug, 2012). At least in my view, the ongoing processes of the literacification of everything seem to be part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Correspondingly, we need conceptual alternatives that are relevant for media pedagogy and educational theory.

## **Aspects of Educational Philosophy and Considerations beyond Definition and Discursive Practices**

From a historical perspective, the tension between normative aspects of internal and external legitimation and educational discourses on conceptual clarifications of the core areas and responsibilities of the discipline, on the one hand, and the increasingly multi-faceted demands of society on the discipline and the educational institutions, on the other, can be differentiated by means of educationalization formulas (*Pädagogisierungsformeln*) and their historical relevance. Hermann Veith (2003, pp. 183-201; see Tab. 1) provides a helpful historical overview of reproduction problems and educationalization formulas for the German-speaking area.

This overview could be expanded in a number of ways, namely in regard to:

- reproduction problems and educational formulas in different countries and regions, as well as comparative analyses;
- interdependences and interferences of different relevance formulas in national, international, transnational and global contexts;
- interplays between cultural, technological and societal dynamics (cf. Rusch, 2007) beyond considerations of societal change;
- chronological updates and contemporary observations.

Correspondingly, medialization can nowadays be regarded as a pedagogical relevance formula which, together with the “competence development” formula and key concepts such as “internal/external control”, “emergence”, “interconnectedness”, “participation” and “(new) culture of learning”, marks a contemporary discourse that refers to the changed medialized conditions of socialization and sociation [*Vergesellschaftung*], the dynamics of relevant process logics, and not least, the requirements of life-long, life-wide and life-deep learning.

The difficulty constituted by the fact that the relevance of relevance formulas, and also that the corresponding problem descriptions are relative, can be alleviated by steering clear of the pitfalls of epistemological foundationalism<sup>iv</sup> and arbitrary positings [*Setzungen*]. The way to achieve this is to pay differentiated attention to the plurality of relevance formulas and the corresponding problem descriptions,<sup>v</sup> and to put this plurality into context in a contrastive manner. For epistemological purposes, a non-foundationalist or “antifoundationalist” approach of the kind proposed by Roel van Goor, Frieda Heyting and Gert-Jan Vreeke (2004) proves promising and useful here (cf. also Heyting, 2001). On the one side, such an undogmatic and non-static orientation accommodates the undecidable character of many questions; on the other, it counters premature, oversimplified or arbitrary solution strategies by means of a threefold contextualization of specific problems and topics (reflection on the meaning context, personal context and discourse context; cf. van Goor/Heyting/Vreeke, 2004, p. 176).

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reproduction crisis</b>	<b>Author/Theory</b>	<b>Educational formula</b>
1519	Crisis of orientation	Luther	School teaching
	Crisis of stability	Ratke	Didactics
<b>Teaching (<i>Unterricht</i>)</b>			
1648	Crisis of faith	Comenius	Moral education
	Crisis of poverty	Pietism	Vocational education
	Rationality deficit	Early Enlightenment	Beneficialness ( <i>Nützlichkeit</i> )
1740	Crisis of supply	Philanthropism	Usefulness ( <i>Brauchbarkeit</i> )
	Structural change	Sextro	Industrial education
<b>Upbringing (<i>Erziehung</i>)</b>			
1789	Erosion of solidarity	Pestalozzi	Popular education
	Crisis of legitimacy	Humboldt	Development of self ( <i>Subjektbildung</i> )
	Foreign rule	Fichte	National education
1815	Restoration	Schleiermacher	Humanistic education
	Value shift	Herbart	Character education
1849	Inequality	Diesterweg	Teacher education
	Class struggle	Herbartians	Ideological education
<b>Education (<i>Bildung</i>)</b>			
1871	Loss of tradition	Progressive education	Spontaneity
	Critique of profession	Meumann	Development
1914	Scarcity of raw materials	Stern	Talent
	Consequences of the war	Humanities	Acquirement of culture
1945	New beginning	Pedagogy of the German Democratic Republic	Practical learning
	Rebuilding	Pedagogy of the Federal Republic of Germany	Maturity
1961	Need for innovation	Action pedagogy ( <i>Tätigkeitspädagogik</i> )	Creativity
	Education calamity ( <i>Bildungsmisere</i> )	Pedagogy of learning	Capacity to act
1990	Globalization	Competence discourse	Self-organization
<b>Learning</b>			

Table 1: Reproduction problems and educational formulas (cf. Veith, 2003, p. 185)

Such an approach opens up manifold possibilities of historically and systematically de- and re-contextualizing key concepts beyond collections of comparative definitions and beyond efforts of translating and integrating existing thesauri, or the more or less taken-for-granted foregrounding of discursive practices in one language. Furthermore, this type of approach may be characterized as relational insofar as definitions, conceptual, theoretical and methodological aspects, as well as corresponding objectives, phenomenal domains and practices, may be differentiated *and* correlated from multiple perspectives without encouraging hegemonic tendencies in the politics of scientific discourse. This applies to both intrinsic and comprehensive aspects of discourse.

In the course of such a context-sensitive approach, it may also become clear which expressions actually figure as key concepts in which discourse communities and how, and to what extent, parallels, similarities, differences and historical changes are distinguishable. For instance, for many European educationalists, terms such as “education”, “media education”, “literacy”, “media literacy”, “competence” or “media competence” may represent current key concepts of their discipline or at least of media education (*Medienbildung*). To date, however, it seems that corresponding definitions, explanations, characterizations and conceptualizations, in addition to related aims, structures, systems, practices and ideologies, have all been contrasted in detail only rudimentarily.<sup>vi</sup>

The same holds true for the global level. During an international expert meeting in June 2003, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defined the term “literacy” as follows:

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society. (UNESCO, 2004, p. 13)

In particular, the further remarks in the document explain how the proposed operational definition can be used for measurement purposes and how it is to be understood in the context of aspects of creating literate environments, literacy governance, cultural identity, civil society, community learning, gender equality and formal and non-formal education, as well as the monitoring and assessment of literacy. The authors attach importance to a plural understanding of literacy (UNESCO, 2004, p. 7), and want to suggest "concrete actions by which policy-makers and program providers might expand and improve their work and thereby address the learning needs of those deprived of learning opportunities" (cf. UNESCO, 2004, p. 29). They also refer to the history of the concept, starting with literacy in the sense of the ability to read and write, as well as having knowledge, skills or competence in the sense of socio-economic dimensions of functional literacy and dimensions of politically active participation, in addition to the ability to critically argue about the written word, and on to social practices of literacy beyond individual skills. At the same time, they highlight that metaphorical uses of literacy "in domains other than those immediately concerned with written texts, such skills as 'computer literacy,' 'media literacy,' 'health literacy,' 'eco-literacy,' 'emotional literacy' and the like do not form part of the plural notion of literacy at issue here" (UNESCO, 2004, p. 7).<sup>vii</sup> Therefore, the authors may sidestep those problems of the literacification of (nearly) everything, which are part of the problem rather than the solution (cf. Hug, 2012). However, this excludes the subjects and problem areas that have become increasingly important not only or not primarily with letters, words and written texts, but with images, numerals, formulas and digital material of all sorts in globalized, mediated and mediatized worlds.

## **Towards a Polylogical Design for Educational Knowledge Organization**

It is quite obvious that neither online tools such as Wikipedia, nor printed reference works such as the *International Encyclopedia of Education* (Peterson/Baker/McGaw, 2010) or *The Routledge International Encyclopedia of Education* (McCulloch/Crook, 2008), meet the requirements related to the

considerations outlined above. This is not so much due to absent contents and conceptual deficits in regard to the justification of epistemological and methodological points of departure. Instead, the decisive factors are the focus on a medial form, the very limited extent of the pursued linking of information and the missing efforts to interrelate historical and systematic perspectives. At this point, it is certainly possible to argue that, in view of the complexity of scientific requirements, the lack of available grants for basic projects with a global and egalitarian focus, the foreseeable technical difficulties, translation challenges of all kinds, the dubiousness of practical benefit, the shortage of political opportuneness or the absent orientation on mainstream developments, the endeavour for a multilingual-, multicodal-, multipurpose- and inter- and transnational project aimed at interrelating key concepts and key issues in (media) education, seems futile and would amount to the experimental creation of an omnipotent tool. Yet, I do believe that there is creative room between monolingual reference works with selected perspectives mostly limited to a few countries, continents and scientific-culture backgrounds, in addition to the vain search for an all-in-one device suitable for every purpose.

In my opinion, there are quite useful starting points for developing such an ambitious project without ethno- or Eurocentric dominance and beyond common discursive practices in academia. Specifically, some are provided by the model of polylogical research (cf. Wimmer, 2001), which can also be applied to educational and pedagogical questions. Just as it is "necessary to inquire about the conditions for the possibility of systematic philosophy under the premise of different cultural imprints, which can be effective on every level of reflection and argumentation" (cf. Wimmer, 2001, p. 382), the effect of implicit assumptions and culturally determined ways of thinking can and must also be foregrounded and reflected on in an educational discourse.

Wimmer (2001, p. 389f) distinguishes among four types of cultural centrisms that can be seen as "loopholes" out of the dilemmas of culturality:

(a) In *expansive centrism*, there is development only through unilateral impact, but not through equal cooperation. "The truth" of a cause is already available and simply needs to be disseminated. The centre influences the periphery, while influences in the other direction do not matter.

(b) *Integrative centrism* is also based on the belief that one's own positions are objectively superior, assuming "that their desirability per se is sufficient to attract and incorporate everything foreign" (Wimmer, 2001, p. 389).

(c) *Separative centrism* means an attitude towards other cultures and societies that lacks the claim to absolute superiority, as different convictions and "truths" can coexist side by side. According to this view, not uniformity but plurality is at the core, yet the culturally conditioned differences in thinking are regarded as insurmountable or, as it were, natural.

(d) Lastly, in the case of *tentative centrism*, one's own view, held out of well-founded conviction, is thought to be a prerequisite for "understanding the equally subjectively motivated differing conviction of others, not only as a fact but also as a legitimacy. Yet at all times, the own view as well as the other view are considered to be revisable. Again, plurality forms the basis but in such a way that its respective form represents something potentially temporary" (Wimmer 2001, p. 389f).

Moreover, each of these types can be seen in a holistic or partial sense, with different notions and positions identifiable on an intra- and intercultural level. The crucial point is which influence processes are being favoured or becoming

effective, and whether they tend to show mutually manipulative or seductive, persuasive or convincing characteristics.

Three basic models of such influence processes may be distinguished (cf. Wimmer 2001, p. 392):

(a) Unilateral centristic influence: *Monologue*

Position X attempts to influence all other positions so that they adjust to position X. Other positions can ignore one another, they have to be changed, overcome or removed (cf. catchwords such as "Westernization," "cultural imperialism" or "acculturation").<sup>viii</sup>

(b) Partial reciprocal influence: *Dialogue*

Unquestioned assumptions of superiority play a modified role here. Even when mutual understanding is considered to be unlikely or impossible, the results are still seen as an achievement of everybody involved in the sense of a selective acculturation.

(c) Complete reciprocal influence: *Polylogue*

This model concerns dialogues between several or many positions, the ideal scenario being that all basic concepts, assumptions, starting points and methods are debatable, and every participant is equally open to arguments. The nature of the resulting form of the polylogue is that "for each tradition [...] every other one [is] 'exotic' in the sense that each is foreign to all the others and none of them are beyond question" (Wimmer 2011, p. 392).

Even though the presupposition of actual equal status, the notion of universally balanced interests and the willingness to question all basic concepts and assumptions have a counterfactual character, the model of polylogical research as a concept regulating practice is still helpful in regard to:

- the encouragement of (self-)perception and openness to different approaches and problem descriptions;
- the description and analysis of culturally conditioned ways of thinking;
- the stimulus to mutual education, by all means also in light of a need to rethink the Enlightenment (cf. Elkana, 2011).

As far as relating key concepts and key issues in education is concerned, this idea of regulating practice may also be helpful insofar as different perspectives, initially based on a few points of crystallization, can be contrasted and contextualized beneficially and from multiple perspectives, without having to invoke all types of approaches, conceptions and cultures. To the degree that the points of crystallization refer to key issues and key concepts considered to be important by all participants, and that their nature allows for connections to new contrastings and further perspectivalizations, they also open up possibilities for learning and development, as well as education potential for all participants.

In this context, an essential challenge may be to let the contemplative character of the communicative effort come into effect and not misinterpret the polylogical activities in the technical sense of working off routines, thereby ultimately subordinating the efforts to technical discourse. The latter can be avoided if: (a) the scopes of thought and action are not needlessly limited by permanently established design principles and design patterns, and (b) the participants are actively involved in the processes of reasonably and iteratively (re-)designing the rooms for manoeuvre. Unlike the design-based research of the learning sciences,<sup>ix</sup> the concern here certainly contains differentiated meta-



theoretical rationales and an involvement with categories, theories and methods from design science.

In my opinion, the fact that design science has had to grapple with similar problems of legitimation and recognition as education studies (cf. Glanville, 1999, p. 80) is an argument for and not against such a debate, one which offers numerous reference points for the flexible design of polylogically-oriented efforts for understanding that include educational key issues and key words (cf. Krippendorff, 2006, esp. Chapter 7). The point here is not to get a grip on things by means of a correct scientific method, but to design "enabling spaces" (Peschl/Fundneider, 2008) that take into account material, social, cognitive, epistemological and technological dimensions, and also to raise our awareness of the extent to which the various scientific perspectifications and approaches may be regarded as restricted acts of design: "(scientific) research is a subset of design, not the other way round" (Glanville, 1999, p. 89).

As to technological aspects of the creation of enabling spaces for polylogical efforts at understanding, a few provisional references must suffice here. On the one hand, some initial steps should be possible using existing tools such as Semantic MediaWiki (SMW)<sup>x</sup> or integrated tools such as CoCoFlash (cf. Naeve et al., 2006; Naeve, 2001a, b). On the other hand, there exist pioneering works such as, *Beyond Paranoid Computing* (Krieg, 2003), which also consistently consider polylogical approaches to complex problems on the level of programming.<sup>xi</sup>

## Conclusion

The variety of academic cultures and the proverbial cultural diversity in Europe are too often bemoaned instead of taken as a resource for innovation and future-oriented developments. Within educational, communication and media studies as well, and not least the networks of the European Educational Research Association (EERA),<sup>xii</sup> the diverse meanings of key words and key concepts are developed and used side by side, rather than put into networked relations. There is also a lack of interdisciplinary and integrative theoretical and methodological discussions aimed at clarifications and contrastive contextualization.

As outlined above, working towards a multilingual-, multiconodal- and multicontextual understanding does not necessarily have to lead to an increase of hegemonic tendencies or to a loss of authority for educational studies and (media) educationalists. On the contrary, polylogical forms of knowledge organization can support a mutual understanding beyond marketing hypes and short-lived fashions, and promote context-sensitive webs and networks of interconnections. Correspondingly, the point is not to insist on systematicity or to bring methodology and theory to perfection for their own sake, but to clarify subject matters and key issues, as well as to strengthen argumentative potentials and to enable collaboration with representatives of other disciplines.

At the outset, I took a stance for "middle courses" between lopsided approaches or mutual ignorance and epistemological hopelessness or arbitrary selection; I hope that my explanations have made clear that these middle courses can make sense, and that we neither have to start from scratch nor limit our efforts to historicist reactualizations. Between *l'art pour l'art* and the principal focus on impact points, creditable and evaluable thoughts, and phrasings worthy of funding, there is leeway for an exploration and communication that has rarely been fathomed before.

In regard to future explorations, I consider organizational, economic, and not least the following aspects, to be important:

- We need to modify and differentiate the demand for a rediscovery of "native concepts", which is supposedly due to the danger of "being governed by a stranger as a conquered province" (Herbart, 1806, p. 8). The advice may not be historically obsolete if you look at some premature and occasionally encroaching reasonings from perspectives of learning technology, neurosciences, biologism, psychologism or sociologism. Nevertheless, it appears to me to be equally important to appreciate that, to put it simply, we cannot do without anything foreign or "other". Only the contrast of different perspectives reveals strengths, weaknesses, blind spots and the need for clarification.
- Even as an independent entrepreneur, education studies remain dependent on other disciplines. Still, even in contexts in which they are considered a subsidiary of other disciplines, we should remember that "education towards truth is always education towards the truth of the educator" (Mitterer, 2001, p. 67). This statement by Josef Mitterer continues to be relevant for educationalists and educational scientists alike.
- If we accept that difficulties have arisen from basing the internal differentiation of knowledge systems on individual media and their dispositives (cf. Leschke, 2010, p. 303), transversal and transmedial dimensions become important, which is also true for inventories of educational knowledge. In this respect, it seems reasonable to focus, also in this context, on media forms as classification devices in the transversally linked media system (cf. Leschke, 2010, p. 305).
- The debates on media competence, media education and media literacy have reached a point where the opposition between technophobic humanities and techno-euphoric engineering and natural sciences appears to have become obsolete.

Considering all of this, it would be a mistake to interpret the remarks in this paper as a simple call to "do culture" in educationalist academia, and less so because "culturality" is, sometimes abusively, held high in the name of tactically motivated correctness. What is more important is a solid skepticism in view of tendencies of "truth-telling", of implicit moralizing and of the education towards truth in pedagogical contexts. For example, the analytical potentials of the "art of government" in a Foucauldian<sup>xiii</sup> sense are all too often somehow pruned and finally turned into moral stances. In so doing, the concept of de-governmentalization emerges as a concept of re-governmentalization on other levels (cf. Hug, 2008). In other words, if Dieter Lenzen and Niklas Luhmann write in the preface to the collected essays on *Bildung und Weiterbildung im Erziehungssystem* (1997) that "Upbringing [Erziehung] is an impertinence, education [Bildung] an offer," they not only raise the question of a polylogical debate on an object-related level. On a second-order level, the statement also challenges the offers and impertinences of educational studies. The more precisely the key concepts and key issues can be articulated and made plausible also vis-à-vis non-specialists, the better the chances of a fruitful discourse and successful practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf.

[http://books.google.de/books?id=OfJMAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Umriss+p%C3%A4dagogischer+Vorlesungen&source=bl&ots=ArqMUe6jdf&sig=WJvViQo6iW5aS5mFNP3z\\_SXEzmq&hl=de&sa=X&ei=4fcjUNKYEMfKtAa](http://books.google.de/books?id=OfJMAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Umriss+p%C3%A4dagogischer+Vorlesungen&source=bl&ots=ArqMUe6jdf&sig=WJvViQo6iW5aS5mFNP3z_SXEzmq&hl=de&sa=X&ei=4fcjUNKYEMfKtAa)

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## Bionote

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<sup>i</sup> For example, this concerns the mobility of researchers, the increasingly standard employment of technology-based collection and evaluation procedures in empirical research, or the education on everyday and scientific myths on the basis of new methods, as provided for instance by Hans Rosling concerning "Insights on poverty" ([http://www.ted.com/talks/hans\\_rosling\\_reveals\\_new\\_insights\\_on\\_poverty.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_reveals_new_insights_on_poverty.html)) and myths about so-called developing countries ([http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/hans\\_rosling\\_shows\\_the\\_best\\_stats\\_you\\_ve\\_ever\\_seen.html](http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/hans_rosling_shows_the_best_stats_you_ve_ever_seen.html)).

<sup>ii</sup> The term "education", for instance, may be translated in German to "Bildung", "Ausbildung", "Bildungswesen", "Bildungsweg", "Erziehung", "Eduktion", "Unterricht", "Schulung", "Training", "Unterweisung", as well as "Bildungswissenschaft" (the course of studies) and "Erziehungswissenschaft" (the academic discipline).

<sup>iii</sup> In both contexts, numerous compound terms are used; here is an incomplete list of examples: action competence, coaching competence, cognitive competence, communicative competence, competence measurement, design competence, diversity competence, ecological competence, emotional competence, gender competence, intercultural competence, key competencies, leadership competence, media competence, meta competence, organizational competence, pornography competence, self competence, social competence, visual competence, etc., as well as art literacy, computer literacy, consumer literacy, digital literacy, diversity literacy, ecological literacy, emotional literacy, environmental literacy, film literacy, food literacy, geographical literacy, hacking literacy, health literacy, information literacy, internet literacy, library literacy, multicultural literacy, numerical literacy, sexual literacy, television literacy, visual literacy, etc.

<sup>iv</sup> The problems of classical foundationalism (empiricism, rationalism and transcendentalism) were pointed out more than 40 years ago by Richard Rorty (1979) in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

<sup>v</sup> As an example, I refer to formulations of the purpose of education in light of the problem definitions and challenges as sketched above, as they have been drafted in various contexts, including online (see, for example, <http://purposed.org.uk/> or <http://educationforthe crisis.wikispaces.com/>).

<sup>vi</sup> See, for example, the European Charter for Media Literacy (<http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu/>), although in the results it is fairly difficult to identify the different accentuations and special features of the individual approaches.

<sup>vii</sup> Cf. debates about "new literacies", e.g. as discussed in Leu (1999) and *Literacy in the New Media Age* (Kress 2003).

<sup>viii</sup> On the other hand, even studies that are not geared to the assimilation of all other positions to one's own position may show a monological character. For example, the monolingual sourcebook on education in traditional cultures (*Erziehung in Traditionalen Kulturen*, Krebs 2001) provides a number of findings and reports from Africa, America, Asia and Australia. However, the reader does not hear from the described groups themselves; the different views of education and their cultural contexts, as well as the educational relevance of the findings, are not discussed from African, (Latin-)American, Asian and Australian perspectives.

<sup>ix</sup> Cf. the critical observations on design-based research and recent learning sciences in Hug/Friesen/Rourke (2007).

<sup>x</sup> Cf. <http://semantic-mediawiki.org/>

<sup>xi</sup> Cf. Erez Elul's "pile machine", which in contrast to the Turing machine, has a polylogical structure and consistently represents objects as generative structures in the form of relations (cf. Krieg 2005; as well as <http://www.heise.de/tp/artikel/19/19187/1.html>). In his theoretical treatises on non-hierarchical yet layered emerging structures, Peter Krieg refers in particular to the polycontextual logic of Gotthard Günther (cf. 1973, 1990), which also offers numerous connecting factors with knowledge organization in regard to key concepts in education.

<sup>xii</sup> <http://www.eera-ecer.de/>

<sup>xiii</sup> With the concept of "governmentality", Foucault aims at a new understanding of power beyond the issues of consensus, will or conquest. He writes: "The relationship

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proper to power would not therefore be sought on the side of violence or of struggle, nor on that of voluntary linking (all of which can, at best, only be the instruments of power), but rather in the area of the singular mode of action, neither warlike nor juridical, which is government" (Foucault 1982, p. 221). Foucault advocates a concept of power that focuses on various forms of social control in disciplinary institutions (for example, schools or hospitals), as well as on different forms of knowledge in contrast to widespread conceptualizations of power in the sense of hierarchical, top-down power of the state. Accordingly, the concept of "government" is not limited to state politics alone. It includes a wide range of control techniques that apply to a variety of phenomena, from one's control of the self to the "biopolitical control" of populations. Thus, Foucault defines governmentality as the "art of government" in a wider sense, which includes organized practices (mentalities, rationalities and techniques) through which subjects are governed, and which is linked to related concepts such as biopolitics and power-knowledge (cf. Foucault 2006a, b).