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To Explore the Pupil’s Thoughts and Experiences during the School Lessons - The "Auricle" as an Artificial Listener
Methodology

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Outlines

It has been shown that competent problem solutions and self-directed learning processes require primarily the ability of learners to estimate their own knowledge and capabilities in a realistic and at the same time affirmative way (cf. results of the SELF Research Centre Sydney; cf. MARSH, BAUMERT, RICHARDS & TRAUTWEIN, 2004). Meanwhile, helping learners acquire realistic and positive self-concepts as well as the ability to be reflective learners has become a predominant training aim of schools of education and instruction. Reflective learning behavior refers to the ability of a learner to control her/his own learning processes (SIMONS, 1992). This learning attitude may be reflected in the proper use of learning strategies and successful completion of problems. Learning strategies are forms of acquiring realities that are made consciously, even if they are originally informally and implicitly learnt. They cover mainly elementary memorizing and heuristic forms of acquiring learning contents (HOFMANN, 2000) and the ability to transfer knowledge. In addition, learning strategies are brought to light in the active selection and structuring of knowledge and learning situations (BAUMERT et al., 2001).

Empirical Setting and Former Research

The “Auricle Installation” makes it possible to explore learning strategies that are normally not uttered loduly during a lesson in school (cp. KRAUS, 2006a, 2007, 2009, 2013). Of interest is now how listening practices may be enhanced through children’s interaction with the auricle. To reach this aim, the empirical study focuses on the question, how the pupils identify the auricle. In the years 2006-2008 the Auricles have been used in different age groups, from the 2nd to the 7th grades (6-13 years old) in schools in Germany (Stuttgart and Berlin), Finland (Vasa), Bulgaria (Sofia) and Argentina (Neuquen). Generally seen, the children were keen on using this device and the classroom situation was easily controllable for the teachers. The research shows that the habitus of the kids are to a quite high extent withdrawn from the reality of school. The data derived from the Auricles enable insight into how social occurrences, learning impulses and objects enter the lives of children and teachers. Their views of curriculum, assessment, education and knowledge are grasped in ways that are not normally possible. This brings forward participatory approaches that seek to access the children’s views in a classroom situation. These empirical studies all made use
of the Documentary Method (see below) and focused the children’s habitus. In my book published in 2007 the Auricle has been studied as means for identification and for proceedings of habitus: The children used the device for their own subtexts in many ways, identifying the Auricle as a friend, pedagogue, parent, spy, public, nurse etc. In two chapters, 2006a and 2009b, the Auricle is introduced as making phenomenology an empirical approach within the Social Sciences. More specifically, it is argued that by its use the phenomenological reduction can be conducted. In another article (2006b, German and English) tacit media influences on learning strategies are shown. In an individual case analysis medium-specific processing samples of reality or strategies of the processing of information modeled by media are to be concisely worked out. A comparative empirical study (Kraus 2009b) reveals significant differences between the school cultures in Vasa/Finland and Stuttgart/Germany from the perspectives of children: Whereas the German pupils dealt mostly with the precarious challenge of self-determined learning and youth culture, the Finnish students for the most part spoke of their leisure time activities. This result mirrors the general impression also of the subtexts that were collected in Bulgaria and Argentina in 2006: national culture differences are delineated and pupils’ participation play quite central role. At an astonishingly young age the kids from these two countries argued quite politically. In the Bulgarian subtexts comparatively often the school lesson contents were commented and democratic concerns were brought up. All kinds of restrictions on the freedom of speech got contrasted with the (“German”) freedom of research. Also in Argentina the (“German”) democratic values such as freedom of research, but also social justice played the central role. The own society was explained as crooked and corrupt. A recent study (2013) reveals German students’ precarious feelings of inadequacy in terms of the efforts expected of them, and shows once again pupils in a classroom share a distinct habitus.

Research Methodology

The "documentary method" developed by Ralf BOHNSACK focuses on socially framed systems of relevance. Departing from GARFINKEL (1967) knowledge is supposed to be expressed in an indexical way; denoting that linguistic expressions are indicators for meanings that are meaningful only in the context of a common cultural background. The general outlines of "documentary method" refer to the approach of Sociology of Knowledge (developed by Karl Mannheim), to Pierre Bourdieu’s “habitus”-concept, to Chicago School/Symbolic Interactionism, Ethnomethodology (introduced by Harold Garfinkel), Grounded Theory (introduced by Barney G. Glaser/Anselm Strauss) et al.:

1. The order of a social environment consists of a certain structure of sense and relevance (“type”), forming a “conjunctive experiential field” of the acting persons. People usually symbolically construct their everyday-world (knowledge and acting) according to these “types”. The system of relevance entails a system of communicative rules (moreover implicit) that unfold e.g. in a communicative context, in which the sense of utterings becomes clear. Also a context of action indicates such a sense. Thus, the persons in the field put their orientations, which are relevant for their acting, metaphorically on scene (unfolding an individual
"habitus" as well as collective „habitus“). „Documents“ (usually the words of the participants in a group discussion) are thus interpreted as indicating („indexes” for) an experiential field shared by a social group.

2. The researcher reconstructs such conjunctive order (“type”) out of a 2nd order perspective. His/her research comes out of his/her everyday-acting and his/her scientifically framed (self-)understanding, s/he has to explicate these frames. Researchers should apply their insights to their own everyday-practice in order to work out the fundamental rules of communicative understanding. This is to say, the researcher has a communicative relation to the subjects (“principle of communication”), and s/he is oriented at a theoretical structure of the topics of research (“principle of openness”). Methodical control means a controlled understanding of the other resp. the control of the differences between the language of the researchers and the language of the subjects.

3. The scientific habitus is genetic, that is to say:

3.1 It brackets any concept of “validity” in order to value the principles of the generation of theories and types in the social environment (the interpretative procedure starts from a research interest which is open enough to be modified in the course of the communication of the acting persons);

3.2 Theories are generated by following the hermeneutic circle alternating theory and observation as well as general rules/norms and the application of rules;

3.3 By a comparative analysis also alternative circles of interpretation are initiated.

The aim is to work out…

1. the differences between the systems/”frames” of interpretation and relevance of the researcher and of the participants;

2. the „generative formula“/”modus operandi“ of the action knowledge of the participants resp. of a „habitus“;

3. the „objective sense“ basing on prejudices towards an interview partner or rejections.

Steps of Interpretation:

1. In a „formulating interpretation“ one works out the central and the secondary topics by paraphrasing the utterings as close as possible to the words (no interpretation).

2. In a „reflecting interpretation“ a discourse is reconstructed, that is to say “the gestures of language” (intonations, focussing metaphors, pauses, etc.) are analyzed in order to get information about.

2.1 the „habitūs“ of the acting persons in terms of their common experiences and orientations for acting (e.g. styles of communication referring to milieus or gender);

2.2 their „frames of orientation“ and their „horizons of comparison”: how they explain the sense of their opinions;
2.3 their „counter-horizons“: what they do not like, distance from etc.

3. “Typifying”: The horizons of experience constituting the orientation frame of the acting persons are supposed to be visible in certain types of their utterings. This step of interpretation is best done by comparing different cases.

The Documentary Method is suitable for the analysis of the reference connections of the "subtexts," particularly in relation to implicit learning and orientation models of pupils, because it makes possible a methodical reconstruction of implicit orientation yardsticks. Furthermore this method delineates a systematic differentiation of various interpretation levels and a formation of comparable groups that is adopted in our case studies. Learners' expressions are methodically evaluated as follows: On the basis the "subtexts" first, the habitūs illustrated by adolescents are worked out. From these results data for interpretation are derived.

It is not of interest whether a mis-en-scène (e.g. uttering) is in fact right or wrong, but what it reveals of the acting persons and their orientation.

References


