Symposium: Esthetics as a Tacit Dimension of Media Education

The “Researching School” – Exploring Tacit Dimensions of Pedagogy by Virtualisations

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The quality development of “Researching Schools” (Kraus 2012) is an integral part of the concept of the cooperating schools. It primarily aims at supporting pupils and teachers in acquiring learning skills and fostering democratic thinking and procedures by the means of scientific research (cp. Benner 1990, cp. Kron, 1999, cp. Tremp 2005, cp. Wildt 2009, cp. Hellmer 2009, cp. Messner 2009). In university it shall support the students’ learning and the research on democracy education. The project has been realized within the cooperation of the Humboldt-Gemeinschaftsschule Berlin/Pankow with the PH Ludwigsburg via moodle.

The school concept of the “Researching School” refers to John Deweys notion of democracy as "a mode of associated living"¹, according to which individual liberty is linked to social engagement. Dewey regards education as „democracy´s midwife“.² Self-efficacy, social responsivity and reflexivity are supposed to be the central aims of democracy education. On the level of school development as well as in school lessons democracy serves as a task and at the same time as a pathway. 

There are two main tasks of the project “Researching School”:

1. It should allow for a quality development based on both, existing and emerging structures, regularly assessed in terms of developing democracy.

2. The acting persons at school as well as those at the universities become acquainted with actual developmental tasks in the school, with the methods and levels of evaluation, they learn how to develop exemplary strategies and procedures in order to reflect on teaching and learning processes and they actively go through processes of quality development.

Here are some details about the operative aspects of the project:
In “Researching Schools” a developmental task can be put by any pupil, teacher, at times also parent or by the head master on a digital slope in the entrance hall of the school. If there are ten votes for it, and maybe also after some changes, it will be followed up, be carried out by the acting persons at school or be delegated to the cooperating scientists (and to their students).

“Researching Schools” are operating via a digital service providing primarily systematic information on and the documentation of the academic procedures and the instruments for a qualitative, dialogically structured evaluation. As a, so to say, “scientific platform” it thus contains descriptions of scientific methods and their possible applications, scientific texts and studies, data, educational material, compilations of didactic methods and examples for applications, the documentation of decisions, results etc. Besides that, it is equipped with further services, e.g. consulting etc. The platform is linked to the platforms at the cooperating universities enabling the cooperating professors and their students to work on the developmental tasks of the cooperating schools. The school members can also draw upon some learning platforms of the cooperating universities. Thus, a continuous reflection and research on the various aspects of quality development takes place and its potentials are figured out. A meticulous and clear documentation of the developmental projects on the digital platform allows for tracking its spiral structure.

Quality development in “Researching Schools”
Here I want to discuss the evaluation of this project in terms of the tacit dimensions of democracy education which might occur in the project – regarding its pedagogical impacts.

**Theoretical background:**

The quality development of “Researching Schools” neither bases upon governmental theories nor on the cognitive sciences or psychometrics. Moreover, another strong movement in pedagogy is followed up by modelling processes of education in reference to anthropological, cultural and esthetical theories (cp. Mollenhauer & Wulf 1996, Liebau 1992, Zirfas 2007, Kraus 2008, Steinnes 2012; „Rat für kulturelle Bildung“ 2012 et al.). In this frame one has especially to take into account that not only well-articulated and -intended, but also non-discursive communication and interaction play an important role in the processes of social development and learning. Instead of focusing on directed and strategical impulses the heterogeneous contextual influences on human behaviour as well as corporal, spatial and material aspects of learning settings etc. are in the sight. In order to figure such aspects out, there is a special need to reflect on practices and to explore them empirically (Wulf 2004, Althans et al. 2007, Nentwig-Gesemann 2001, Herbert 2011, Bergstedt 2012, Kraus 2012; network “Tacit Dimensions in Pedagogy” et al.) especially in order to work out the tacit practical and environmental factors on social life and on the individuals.

In terms of media literacy also unfamiliar phenomena and concepts may get in sight. This is especially the case, when the bodily origin of experiences and insights is emphasized by taking over e.g. a phenomenological perspective (Meyer-Drawe 1996, Herczeg & Winkler 2004, Friesen 2009 et al.).

In my presentation I will unfold some aspects of the role of tacit dimensions of pedagogy. I want to discuss with you, how they can be reflected in terms of the participative school development of “Researching Schools” on the digital platform.

This school development generally bases on the professional support in following up plural and conflicting orders, rules and norms in the frame of individual tasks, challenges in the organisation of lessons and school culture as
well as such of assessment and evaluation. One has to take into account three levels.

„Real“ are the socially constituted structural principles of the institution, „symbolic“ are the processes of interaction and „imaginary“ are the self-relations of the institution.

These levels are constituted by rights and duties, by forms of acting (communicatively, strategically, powerfully etc.) and by forms of expression and lifestyle, regarded as excellent, (diversely) legitimated, tolerable, marginal, tabooed etc.

Helsper & Lingkost worked out that in terms of the concurrence-oriented concept of democracy one especially has to take repressive practices into account:

1. If sensual-bodily aspects are mentioned, this is often connected to the devaluation in terms of maturity or professionalism with the aim to strengthen one´s own power position by means of infantilising others or accusing them of dilettantism;
2. by putting pressure on someone to legitimize his or her own position (by the means of an inquisition, by causing a double bind etc.), one might implicitly express one´s doubt on the integrity and reliability of another;
3. The same might be true, if there is a reversal of legitimation or an accusation of rebellion or of submissive behaviour;
4. Other forms of devaluating competent judgement might be arranged by favoritism, irony, pretending evidence, implicit objections, humiliations, flowery phrases, blowing up small problems, disregarding rules of politeness (being anonymous or ruling), producing conflicts of loyalty, applying pressure via assessment, enforcing decisions, moderating restrictively, confronting with ex ante decisions, pseudodecisions, declaring decisionmaking as a learning process, reducing decisions to yes and no without problematizing them.

These forms of a tacit undermining of democratic procedures in school contexts might occur at any time. How to operationalize a constant awareness of it?

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On the „real“ level of socially constituted structural principles of the institution, on the „symbolic“ level of interaction and on the „imaginary“ level as the self-relations of the institution one has to look at the rights and duties, at the forms of a communicative, strategical, power-related etc. acting and at the forms of expression and lifestyle, regarded as excellent, (diversely) legitimated, tolerable, marginal, tabooed etc.