Theoretical Aspects of Teacher Training

Gerd-Bodo von Carlsburg

Heidelberg University of Education, Germany, Keplerstraße 87, D-69120 Heidelberg, b.v.carlsburg@gmail.com

Abstract. In the first part of the contribution, we discuss the question of so-called ‘progressive’ educational reforms and changes, which, however, can only be convincing if they are resting on a solid basis of legitimacy and argumentation. In educational science, we should resist talking up fashion-adapted ideology to ideas or fiction, which as last consequence are leading to confusion in structure and terminology, as Franz Hofmann (1979, 5–33, esp. 5) pointed out already. Knowledge from the history of science forms the basis of our considerations. The second part focuses on the practical consequences, namely the relationship between teaching methods and personal mindset of teachers and its impact on the learning environment. We touch upon significant shortcomings in current educational practice, and try to conceive an ‘antitype’ to the traditional, problematic conception of teaching, namely a teaching practice, characterized by the current teaching ethos and based on professional skills and competences which are both historically grounded and close to the ‘zeitgeist’.

Keywords: Educational processes, history of science, scientific language, discussion of norms and values, re-orientation of education, action-oriented teaching, ‘antitype’ of teaching, atmosphere, lifelong learning (LLL), teacher ethics, technical and professional competences, options of education.

Reorientation of education in the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC)

At each stage of the reshaping of the self-image of educational theory in the course of its history, it was an error not always avoided by scholars to neglect in some way or other the striving for the general relevance that the age demanded of it. As Hofmann pointed out in 1979 (Hofmann 1979, 5–33), the precondition for a general Theory of Education to gain importance and success has been for it to expose itself continually to a critical comparison with the practice of education, and to be able to analyse the result in terms of philosophy, theory of science and logic from the perspective of educational theory; to be able to eliminate the inessential, “to systematically weave together the disparate” and be able to test itself particularly as the proponent, challenging contradiction, of a “critical educational reason” in the ongoing debate with the continually changing routine practice of education (Hofmann 1979, 14).
I should like at this point to draw attention to the contrary attempts at manipulation under all dictatorships, including therefore the Czarist Russian and the Soviet. Such attempts were attacked by both the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy (Kegler, 1991, 82–90) and the Russian journalists, writers and educationalists of the 19th century, particularly Vissarion Grigorevich Belinsky (1811–1848) (Brockhaus 1894a. 65; 1894c. 102; Belinski 1953), literary critic, until shortly before his death still on the staff of the journal “The Contemporary”, connoisseur of the philosophy of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), and inspired by the circle of students and literati in Moscow around Nikolai Vladimirovich Stankevich (1813–1840) (Brockhaus 1894a, 65; 1894c, 102; Brown, 1966).

Their critique was directed at the Czarist educational system. One thinks particularly here of the journalists of the “Contemporary”, Nicolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevski (1828–1889) (Brockhaus 1895, 1032; 1894b, 376) and his ‘pupil’ Nicolai Alexandrovich Dobrolubov (1836–1861) (Brockhaus, 1894b, 376; Dobroljubow, 1956), who identified themselves with the ideas of Belinsky and the writer Alexandr Ivanovich Herzen (1812–1870) (Brockhaus, 1894c, 101 f.). Their ideas gave the direction both for the thinking of the ‘liberal’ Russian democrats in terms of a renewal and humanisation of the Russian school system up to the beginning of the Stalin Doctrine, when this democratisation movement was abruptly broken off. The tradition of this body of ideas was then taken up by responsible educationalists in the period of perestroika in the Soviet Union, including the occupied areas. Similar trends can be found in the former Eastern Bloc states.

But even efforts towards developing a democratic theory of education were subject to the self-imposed compulsion to produce, with a minimum of time and effort, educational questions of the day and make them available ad hoc, providing supposedly ‘pithy’ or fashionable answers, thus contradicting historical experience. In the longer term, the consequence of this dilemma was a mixture of efforts in the field of theoretical foundations, often obscured by hasty and over-simplified views that were meant to be effective in practical application.

The adaptation of educational systems to direct preparation for working life was and remains directed against the basic humanist aim to prepare people for life in the round and to base decisions on occupational careers on a sound general education.

It is, however, an ancient truth that educational progress will only be brought about to the extent to which it is built on secure foundations. It is an imperative task to prevent, to the utmost of our ability, the erection of Towers of Babel in educational theory that finally – to keep with this image – lead to a confusion of learned language.

In searching for possible solutions, the approach of F. Hofmann, which has hardly been taken note of up to now, should also be considered. Rightly, he urged us to consider problems of current importance:

1. The precondition for the successful accomplishment of current tasks in the development of educational theory is a profound understanding of the history and views of...
1. The precondition for the successful accomplishment of current tasks in the development of educational theory is a profound understanding of the history and views of scholarship (Hofmann, 1979, 28 f.). To make a selection from paradigms of broad scope, bearing in mind the most representative directions (p. 11 ff.), we...
scholarship (Hofmann, 1979, 28 f.). To make a selection from paradigms of broad scope, bearing in mind the most representative directions (p. 11 ff.), we would name the following:

- The “Didactica generalis”/”General didactic” (“Opera didactica omnia” [1627–1657], esp. “Didacticorum operum Pars Prima: Didactica magna <…>” of 1627–1642) of Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670) is surely among the first comprehensive attempts to do justice to general philosophical demands on teaching and learning. In it, he determines the formation of the self as the driving force behind the General, and derives
- from these imperative didactic consequences (ibid.; cf. Arnhardt/v. Carlsburg 2014).

2. If the eastern states today are to move along new lines and resume the connection with the international development of educational theory, then suitable importance must be accorded to a new perspective of General Educational Theory and the requirements of the development and elaboration of the relevant theoretical language. Everyday language, specialised language, learned language of antique origin, and the terminology of educational theory of recent decades must be taken up, and freed from their ambiguity, to serve the definition of fundamental concepts for the development of an educational theory which is to avoid both outdated and restrictive outside influences and at the same time the tendency to trivialising commonplaces (Hofmann 1979, 30; 1985, 5). Educational theory does well always to seek the proximity of the origin and development of general language, as for instance Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) was successful in doing. The chapter “The Slavonic Peoples” (“Slawische Völker”) in his “Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind” (“Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte
der Menschheit”) of 1784 (Herder, 1978, 393–400), in which, for the peoples settled in the area “from the Don to the Elbe, from the Baltic to the Adriatic”, “beyond the Carpathian mountains, <…> beyond the same, where they once were in Wallachia and Moldavia” (p. 393), he longed for salvation from slavery and the “renewal of the old festivals, steady hard work and trade” (Hofmann, 1985, 17, cited Herder, 1952, 484 f.), aroused precisely in the young in search of identity, “the young intelligentsia of these nations”, a strong echo. Herder’s body of thought and the great number of the “translations and annotations” of his ideas and works in the Slavonic-speaking countries are a proof of his influence on the educational systems and thinking of these peoples (Hofmann, 1985, 17, cited Herder, 1952, 484 f.). The history of the East European states shows that this country too was not free of efforts such as Herder’s struggles were concerned with.

3. In connection with our central question, more attention needs to be paid to the genesis and development of a systems and “internal structure” of a scientifically based educational theory. The Baltic States, for instance, and other states trying to reform their educational system should endeavour to measure the efforts that have grown out of their national history towards a systematisation of a General Theory of Education for teacher training and further training by internationally proven standards, in order to develop a structure for its future educational theory that would be suitable on all counts. This would then pave the way for world-wide co-operation (Hofmann, 1979, 31, cf. 1980, 5 ff.).

4. It will be unavoidable to sound out the “filiation of educational theory” as a unified discipline in its subdivisions or (sub-)disciplines, paying for instance sufficient attention to the “methodological” questions in the constitution of subdivisions directly connected with the same classification (1979, 31). The debate in Germany on this is controversial. The important thing is that it is not a question of establishing disciplines once and for all, then accepting these as having exclusive validity. Every discipline ought to develop in its own self-image, corresponding to progress in knowledge, the spirit of the age, and the exigencies of actual practical education, insofar as it’s continued existence is justified, or it must re-structure itself. The whole gains in importance by breaking down by means of interdisciplinary thinking the (all-too) rigidly classified thinking in disciplines.

5. Many basic questions as to the content of education and the educational process must remain related to actual possibilities. This affects both the latent adoption in educational theory of new insights and the basing of the processual on social psychology. On the one hand, essential elements of the development of educational theory must constantly be subject to revision, but on the other they must stand above the requirements of the day if they are not to exhaust themselves in mere ‘practicism’ – as in the recent past – or reduce themselves to absurdity (ibid.). This is shown by the Soviet-influenced past.

All attempts to give the teacher generally valid prescriptions for action in the field of intellectual and moral education, or to oblige him to adopt these, have led to the dilemma of a manipulated teacher who neither gives his pupils the opportunity for self-realisation in school, nor is able to realise himself there. Teaching aids and materials going into detail
as far as directions for individual lessons were contrary to the fundamental intention of “humanistic education” by necessarily amounting, with or without the will of the teacher, to the manipulation of people: thus specific tenets, even blackboard diagrams and pictures etc., were prescribed, thus there were in the socialist countries prescriptions in the form of educational plans, from binding educational objectives to the methods by which these plans were to be realised, independent and detached from the pupil.

6. Teacher training in the future should, if it is to have lasting success, assign a broad place to that “General Theory of Education” (Herbart, 1806) which favours educational and literary innovation in such a way that, through “mass literature” and “mass media”, it becomes a common concern both professionals and the public. Only in this way can a General Theory of Education become a practical philosophy with relevance to action (p. 32).

Current media education, which should be an obligatory field of study in teacher training, must thus be accorded an important function in intellectual and moral education. It can not only exploit the new technologies for teaching and learning as a form of training and instruction, but should fulfill its tasks as a mediator between the individual and society, primarily in the sector of socialisation and enculturation, harness new technologies for education through the media, draw attention to harmful influences, above all through the representation of violence in the media – from television via interactive video to the computer – endeavour to prevent this by planned enlightenment and effective boycotting, and finally, from the perspective of development psychology and anthropology, fulfill an important function as trailblazer in the field of the “moral development” (‘media morality’) of children and adolescents (Arnold, 1993, 178 ff., esp. 208 f.), by creating a critical, ethical access marked by good judgment to the values transmitted by the media.

7. Finally, it must be clear to every educationalist that, in his field of vision and educational work, “communication” in the sense of mutual understanding or connection and “institutionalisation” affect each other mutually. The goal and condition of educational policy in a pluralist society must be the establishment of schools on a scientific basis, research centres, educational associations and a varied landscape of educational institutions – woven together into a viable network (Hofmann, 1979, 32).

Furthermore, however, a General Theory of Education must not neglect the connection between the style of teaching and the personal attitudes of both teachers and pupils.

Reflections on the Connection between the Style of Teaching and Personal Attitudes in Teacher Training

Those who embrace such a view of education will open up a source (of knowledge) from which the New can grow.
In the field of school educational theory, during the past decade among other things an interesting stimulus for the General Theory of Education has emerged. This is a view of education corresponding to current requirements, and which is based on the much-quoted unity of intellectual and moral education, socialisation and enculturation. In the history of education, there are many understandable attempts to accelerate learning and render it more intensive. In this connection, we may still feel the influence of the Leipzig progressive educationalist Hugo Gaudig (1860–1923), whose method of “free mental work” [“activity”] (Gaudig 1922) involved leading the pupil along his ‘own path by his own means to his own goals’ – in the sense of ‘self-determination in the formation of personality’ (Gaudig, 1923).

Here, in terms of the history of education, it is evident that Herbartians such as Tuiskon Ziller (1917–1982) or Wilhelm Rein (1847–1929), in whom the Herbartian tradition was embodied, not in the obscure image of a Herbartian teacher, in their basic statements as true precursors of progressive education, and not as the maligned formalisers of Herbartian ideas that they are frequently wrongly accounted. In the writings of Ziller and Rein, educational views like those of H. Gaudig are already developed, and cross-connections show an almost congruent view of education.

Intensive learning and education are connected with strong, moving processes of the development of personality. There are a great number of studies on the theory and method of education written on potencies of the subject matter. The much-quoted unity of all factors in teaching has often been aimed at through the activation of all the potential of the stock of education. This is surely one, though not the only, relationship in this total complex. Even where teachers in school and suitable institutions endeavour to achieve the activation of these immanent educational and socialisation potencies, limits become apparent to this simplifying view. Teaching demands other conditions and driving forces of strong socialising effect. They must be added to the educational potencies that have their source in the scholarly content of the teaching material, and fuse with them in a unity typical of the age and situation concerned. The unity is chiefly marked by an active basic attitude, one urging to activity and mostly marked throughout school life.
Today it is no longer sufficient to speak of creative activity and self-activity in class. We must become aware of widespread inadequacies of teaching, which is not based on the unity of intellectual and moral education, socialisation and enculturation.

In the following, an (initial) attempt at outlining the counter-image from which our views can clearly detach themselves is to be undertaken.

The counter-image to properly theory-based teaching, to all historical experiences, and today’s insights is chiefly characterised by inadequate activation of attitudes that form the basis of the establishment of the pupils’ self-image. This style of teaching had to be applied by all teachers under Soviet influence, thus including those in Lithuania, although many teachers were conscious of this, and strove constantly to break out of this dilemma.

Typical symptoms of this approach are:

1. The actor, that is, the one who is in fact and chiefly active in the course of lessons, remains the teacher. His educative function in the classroom consists principally in presenting, explaining, analysing and justifying the subject matter, the body of material to be learnt. He demands a given mode of behaviour and attitude, and sets out to inculcate both behaviour and attitude in the pupils. Considered generally, the presenting, conveying and demanding style of teaching and educating predominates here, and marks the character of the procedure in the classroom as influence from without.

2. Let us sketch the counter-image to ‘scientific’, ‘modern’ teaching marked by a teacher’s ethic, with regard to the pupils, ignoring here too numerous questions of detail and seeking to discover the typical. The learner is predominantly in a passive attitude. His function is mainly that of listener and observer, he is asked questions, given activities to perform, and is examined on the results of what he does. He mainly listens to the teacher talking, he observes his experiments, takes note of his explanations; that is, he ‘follows’ the lesson, as is appropriately said. Logically, the pupil becomes uncommunicative and unskilled in speaking. Expression is impoverished; the answers shrink to a few individual words. The deterioration of handwriting, the external disorder in class and in the keeping of exercise books – all is this is to some extent connected with the situation just sketched.

Pupils are made into clichés; they have to learn their lessons by heart. There is no independent development or creative activity in the direction of an explorative style of education. The essence of this approach is an “educational principle of the obedient pupil”, a type of education with a fateful historical background. What we should produce is not the obedient pupil, but the wide-awake, observant, contradicting, pugnacious, critical pupil.

3. A third characteristic of the counter-image relates to the manner of the presentation of information. In many places, the oral method of the transmission of knowledge still predominates in the classroom. ‘Putting over the material’, a phrase familiar in regard to this form of teaching, does not, however, produce the best preconditions for attentiveness, concentration, interest or readiness to learn; on the contrary. The subject matter is
something that exists, so to speak, outside of the pupil, to be adopted or imbibed by him. The teacher ‘transfers’ the material or the knowledge to the pupil. In this typical situation, constant admonishing can only preserve concentrated attention, reminding, requesting or reprimanding. The pupil all too often ‘drops out’ of the lesson; that is, he switches off his attention and pursues his own thoughts. Only requests to repeat, practice, summary or testing cause him to work with some concentration again.

4. The criterion of all classroom work is the activity of the learner in acquiring knowledge. It arouses pleasure in discovery, in the solution and clarification of problems; it stirs stimulating impatience and curiosity, and pleasure in recognition.

The counter-image to theory-based teaching is characterised by insufficient stimulation of active learning. This results chiefly from the impetus coming in most cases from the outside. The pupil thinks, because he is told to do so. Largely, there is no energy or drive. Thus, we can observe in many cases that no essential independent mental work on the part of the pupil in the sense of Hugo Gaudig takes place that could develop and promote his self-image.

5. The counter-image to ‘scientific’, ‘modern’ teaching marked by the teacher’s ethic is also largely characterised by the fact that the teacher is not able in many cases to state what point in the process of appropriation the individual pupil has arrived at, what mistakes he has made, or what he has not understood. Only by means of a ‘well contrived’ system of testing of achievement is he able to observe what the pupil knows or does not know, how secure and complete his knowledge and skills are.

But testing provides information only about the results of the preceding process. The appropriation of knowledge and the practicing of skills, however, do not become apparent through the traditional alternation of the teacher’s presentation, discussion in class, and summarising the material. This path does not lead to the individual pupil, but to the anonymous average, the mass. And precisely this is the problem: the aim is to make pupils work as Peter Petersen (1884–1952) conceived and practiced it in his “Life Community School” (The Lichtwark School at Hamburg) and the “Free General Primary School” (The Jena-Plan School [Petersen, 1927; 1934]). And to observe
these processes, to give stimuli, to guide, to permit the pupil himself to present the findings, to support the pupils’ own will: this is the alternative to the counter-image outlined here.

6. The practical orientation to the average speed of learning, which is determined by the average pupils in the class, contradicts the view of innovative pupil-oriented teaching that is theory-based in the sense mentioned here. Enough attention has been drawn in all epochs of the history of educational theory to the consequences of this average speed of teaching – a central and universal educational problem – so that a detailed account of it is superfluous. Because too little is demanded of the able and willing pupils, and too much of the less able and less active ones, the former feel they are not being stretched and the latter that they are being neglected. This typical trait of classroom life also produces noticeable effects over the course of months or years. As time passes, it brings about a lessening of attention and of readiness to learn and work, just where an increase is necessary. It is by no means wrong to assume that between these attitudes to classroom learning and general interestedness, connections also exist with the inactivity of the pupils. What is involved is a problem of the (practical) interest in knowledge.

7. All the characteristics named thus far make visible as a whole a rigidity of educational thought, which one could also term formalisation. Monotony and stereotypy in classroom procedure have, together with the already mentioned phenomena, a disadvantageous effect on the attitude to learning of the pupils. Once the first years of school have passed, a certain feeling of monotony can very soon develop in the pupils, which at times extends to distaste and disinclination towards the school and the teachers.

And thus we again come to the point of contact between attitudes to lessons and receptivity to ideals and norms (a vicious circle).

8. So-called subject teaching methods are of no use at all when teaching is not conceived as ‘education of the person’ (“Erziehender Unterricht”). In the 16th paragraph of his introduction to the “General Theory of Education” (“Allgemeine Pädagogik aus dem Zweck der Erziehung abgeleitet”) of 1806, Herbart formulates it thus:

“The theory of education is the discipline that the educator needs for himself. But he should also possess learning to communicate. And I confess here that I have no concept of educating the person without the communication of learning; just as I can perceive conversely, at least in this study, no imparting of knowledge that does not educate. What arts and skills a young person may learn from some master merely for the sake of profit is as unimportant to the real educator as what color clothes he may choose. But to the educator, how his way of thinking develops is everything; for ideas become feelings, and from these in turn result principles and modes of behaviour” (Herbart, 1976, 76).

The counter-image to ‘scientific’, ‘modern’ teaching marked by the teacher’s ethic may be recognised by its lack of effect in educating the person, and in particular such a style of teaching promotes a lack of discipline. Of course there are many other causes of lack of discipline, but discipline is the result of the total process. Teaching of this kind, however,
creates certain potential preconditions for disorder and lack of interest, for instance, which gain ground where other causes are present. Frequently the cause of lack of interest in learning, general lack of interest and of discipline is prompted by the suppression of the urge for self-activity. Self-awareness and the will to achieve, which are marked in the young, are reduced and damaged, and there are too few results from their own efforts.

The above-mentioned features, and many others not mentioned, thus characterise a counter-image to good teaching. A form of ‘modern’ teaching which we may term ‘scientific’ that differs from this in every particular, arising from the teacher’s ethic, from his obligation and responsibility towards the child, founded in the view of “guiding” and “permitting growth” (“Guiding or Permitting Growth” (“Führen oder Wachsenlassen”) [Litt, 1927, esp. 99 f.]) and growing itself, which intends ‘education appropriate to children’, should cause teachers and pupils to seek, with regard to their self-realisation, their own interests along their own lines with their own goals. If we proceed from the above-mentioned problem of self-realisation, a second side is also to be considered, which a condition sine qua non for this self-realisation is: that both teachers and pupils be open to the values and norms of the community, since otherwise a development just as fatal as the dictatorial, doctrinaire one of the past would take place. It is dangerous to make the self all-important, to cut away everything else, and leave the pupil alone to see how he is to proceed on the future path of his life.

The whole complex of modern re-shaping of the theory of education in teacher training, however, is wider than this; only part of it has been discussed here. Other important problems, such as the determining of the content and extent of general education, of the relation between general and special education, the relation between knowledge and qualification, and much else, could not be dealt with in the framework of these remarks.

The reality of school life has shown and continues to show how inadequately developed potential of emotionality, willpower and strength, and a lack of motivation or of interests, are the causes and consequences of feelings of discontent in school today.
Conclusions

Analyze and conceptualization history of pedagogy theory let us understood, that teacher training education and improving students’ achievement justified importance of theoretical aspects based on the most famous progressive and innovative pedagogical thinkers. A good education system depends on high-quality teachers and teacher education. Due to rapidly changing responsibilities of teachers, substantial reforms in teacher education are necessary. For improving students’ performance, teachers’ education should be developed as an open and dynamic system. It should also involve the evolution of the old concepts of the profession.

References


Mokytojų rengimo teoriniai aspektai
Gerd-Bodo von Carlsburg

Heidelbergo edukologijos universitetas, Keplerstraße 87, D-69120 Heidelberg, Vokietija, b.v.carlsburg@gmail.com

Santrauka

Pirmoje straipsnio dalyje aptariamos vadinamosios „progresyvios“ pedagoginės naujovės ir pasikeitimai, kurie tik tuomet gali būti įtikinami, jei patikimai argumentuoti ir legitimuoti. Mes turime užkirsti kelią tam, kad pedagogikoje madingos mintys nebūtų išaukštinamos iki idėjų arba net fikcijų, nes logiškos to pasekmės, kaip jau pastebėjo Franzas Hofmannas (1979, 5–33), dažniausiai yra struktūrų ir terminų painiavą. Mokslų istorijos duomenys suteikia pamaštymams išeities tašką. Antroje dalyje aptariamos praktinės pasekmės, pamokos metodų ir asmeninio mokytojo nusistatymo sąryšį ir terminų painiavą. Mokslų istorijos duomenys suteikia pamaštymams išeities tašką. Antroje dalyje aptariamos praktinės pasekmės, pamokos metodų ir asmeninio mokytojo nusistatymo sąryšį bei su tuo susijęs poveikis mokymo aplinkai. Taip pat minimi esminiai šiuolaikinio darbo trūkumai, be to, bandoma tradicinei problemei mamokos sampratai priešpriešinti pamoką, kuri remiasi mokytojo etika, istoriškai pagrįstomis ir laiko dvasių arimomis dalykinėmis ir gebėjimų kompetencijomis.

Esiminiai žodžiai: švietimo procesai, mokslo istorija, mokslo kalba, diskusija dėl normų ir vertinčių, orientacija į šiuolaikinį švietimą, į veiksmus orientuotas mokymas, mokymo „antipodas“, atmosfera, mokymasis visą gyvenimą (MVG), mokytojų etika, švietimo techninių ir profesinių gebėjimų galimybės.

Įteikta / Received 2016-09-14
Priimta / Accepted 2016-10-10