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Informal Learning as a Challenge for School Development – Operationalizing the Tacit Dimensions of Democracy Education

By the concept of informal learning the fact can be grasped scientifically that we present our orientation in the everyday-world, our social engagement and our capabilities in different fields rather apart from school knowledge. Informal learning nowadays plays a central role in scientific psychology and in education policy. Hence, different tools for the validation of informal learning have been developed (see: EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQARF, EUROPASS). Informal learning is here mainly considered in terms of the acquisition of qualifications and vocational training.

The theoretical aim of my contribution is to unfold a pedagogical understanding of informal learning. Here, I will stick to the hypothesis that considering informal learning in democracy education is a form of promoting disadvantaged learners. Hereby, the achievement gap is supposed to be reduced and the new social question is defused (cp. also Helsper 2001, Helsper & Lingkost 2001, Reich 2005, Abs & Veldhuis 2008, et al.).

The principle of educational equality is deeply connected to the idea of democracy, especially according to John Deweys (1916, 1933) concept of „democracy as a way of life“.

Informal learning eludes the governmental approach in pedagogy (Dohmen 2001 et al.). It has the character of implicit learning, including procedural, contextual, pre-reflexive, sensory aspects, and can be regarded as part of concepts such as experience-based learning, self-directed, or competence-oriented learning, etc. (Reber 1993 et al.). Our research on the tacit dimensions in pedagogy (Bergstedt et al. 2012) has shown that on one side informal learning is the indispensable basis of formal learning, that is to say, it makes learning possible. On the other side, it can be a hindrance for it. This is true e.g. for habitual insularities, indispensable conflicts of norms, or values that cause ideological narrow-mindedness.

What does this mean for the operationalization of the different aspects of democracy education? By referring to the results of different empirical studies on democracy education and democracy in schools, I present a schedule for the operationalization of the impact of informal learning on democracy education.

Referenzen:

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