

## Arts Education and Transformations

### Challenges for Sensitised Perspectives and Methodological Further Developments

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#### Introductory remarks by the authors

The “Spectra of Transformation” winter school did not only invite junior scientists from several countries to enter into an exchange but dared including an actor who is not often met within the scientific system: playing the role of the “critical friend”, we were invited to accompany the event and to reflect our observations back to the participants – a rare but courageous and productive format which made us happily accept the invitation. Being members of the nationwide *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung (Network of Arts Education Research)*, we observed the winter school from the perspective of this network, from the point of view of our own research, as scientists included into discourses as well as both socially and culturally included individuals who are themselves in the midst of transformation processes and (must) take a position towards them – a position challenging the reflection on this as well as on our own perspective, which is privileged in many respects. In the here presented contribution we thus formulate considerations on the research on arts education (in the context of transformation processes); these are not only influenced by our white, academic position but also by having been socialized in the context of several aspects of digitalization, a specific relation to the topic, and a way of dealing with cultural education which definitely we do not understand as being inclusive but as often being connected to distinction and exclusion.

By the following considerations, in the course of which we will deal with methodical and methodological issues of cultural education in the context of transformation processes, we connect to the Network’s goal of (further) developing topic-adequate methods and methodological foundations. This includes both taking sensitising and critical perspectives and a focus on interactions as an aspect which, in our opinion, is crucial for cultural education. At first, however, we will shortly introduce the *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung*.

## 1. The Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung<sup>1</sup>

The *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung* is a nationwide German network, founded in 2010, for the support of interdisciplinary exchange on theories, questions and research methods of arts education among colleagues. It aims at initiating and intensifying the exchange among scientists from different disciplines as well as among scientists and (research-interested) practitioners. Furthermore, this platform strives for further developing empirical research approaches which do justice to the cultural-aesthetic field while also having effect on practical work. Starting out from this, the network is obliged to three essential goals it pursues in the context of several formats:

- (1) The (further) development of artistic, aesthetic and arts educational, process-oriented research (on impacts is brought forward by way of adequate methodologies and methods a. o. in the context of the yearly Network congresses as well as by way of the publications of the Network. In the context of lectures, keynotes and artistic laboratories the yearly congresses in cooperation with several Network partners discuss and reflect on concrete research approaches for the further development of the field.<sup>2,3</sup>
- (2) The support and networking of junior scientists from the field of the research on arts education happen in the context of the *research colloquium* of the Network which exists since 2013. More than 30 young scientists writing their graduation theses on issues of arts education are networked there. Accompanied by a team of senior researchers,<sup>4</sup> they cooperatively exchange their ideas at meetings happening at regular intervals. Their inclusion into the yearly Network congresses contributes to their networking with established researchers and helps with presenting their works.<sup>5</sup>
- (3) Another goal is the transfer of gained research insights into arts education practice. This happens, among others, in the context of the *topical clusters*, initiated in 2016, which are dedicated to aspects such as arts education and diversity, arts education and inclusion, critical arts education, education and age, or interaction and participation in arts education or culture.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the here presented goals and formats, the *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung* is characterized by a specific way of understanding effect which is here shortly

explained and will later be explained in more detail. Arts education and its research are included into legitimization discourses where not seldom an understanding of effect is assumed which is like a mono-causal stimulus-response scheme (see section 3.3, p. 156). Also there are high expectations research must react to by critically making them a topic, to work against any overtaxing understanding of arts education as a universal remedy. Against this background, the *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung* is characterized by understanding impacts as complex, iterative networks requiring topically adequate, methodical approaches at the interest in transformations and their processes at the micro-, meso-, and macro-level (see Fink et al. 2010).

## 2. The taking of critical and sensitive perspectives

From the point of view of the *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung*, another challenge for a kind of research aiming at shedding light on issues of arts education (as well as on the connections between the latter and transformations) is the taking of (self-)critical perspectives and the putting into question of one's own research questions. The latter are not at last also a result of being included into the relevant discourse as well as of the thus connected aspects of power: among others, we researchers must ask ourselves what the really relevant issues are. Which issues do we take up by our research? Being both researchers and subjects, what is our attitude towards the topics of our research? Where are the limits of our thought – as far as to: What is impossible to think? How could research contribute to letting those subjects and marginalised groups speak which as yet are not heard?

In view of the "Spectra of Transformation" winter school, here we may refer to topical aspects and issues of migration and post-colonialization which are negotiated by the Network and are e. g. in the focus of the topical cluster "Arts Education and Diversity"<sup>7</sup> or are negotiated in the context of several contributions to our congresses. If practical projects and (accompanying) studies on these topical fields are not seldom connected to expectations that arts education might support social change and integration processes and present solutions, research in this field requires a critical-deconstructive view at historical, post-colonial and trans-/inter-cultural influences. Even if thus connected racism- and discrimination-sensitive perspectives again and again confront research with new challenges and critical (self-)reflection, they are indispensable for the further development of the research and practice of arts education. Only

1 <http://www.forschung-kulturelle-bildung.de/>

2 <http://www.forschung-kulturelle-bildung.de/tagungen>

3 <http://forschung-kulturelle-bildung.de/publikationen/netzwerkpublikationen>

4 Current team members are: Professor Dr. Vanessa-Isabelle Reinwand-Weiss, Prof. Dr. Fabian Hofmann, JunProfessor Dr. Juliane Gerland as well as Dr. Eric Sons and Dr. Tobias Fink.

5 <http://www.forschung-kulturelle-bildung.de/kolloquium/forschungskolloquium>

6 <http://www.forschung-kulturelle-bildung.de/>

7 Further information about the topical cluster headed by Nina Stoffers and Jun. Professor Ulas Aktas are found under: <http://www.forschung-kulturelle-bildung.de/cluster-menue/chemen-cluster-ueberblick/131-die-themencluster-des-netzwerks-4>

this way it is possible to reveal exclusion processes, which are often inherent with arts education, as well as attributions and reproductions of this kind.

Against this background, in the following we refer to the example of a currently published research study as well as to two other contributions which are discussed in the context of the recent congress of our Network and were published in the congress volume in autumn, 2017. Apart from a variety of other studies, research approaches and publications on the topic,<sup>8</sup> the here presented contributions are considered to be important for the debates at the winter school and to be pioneering for the further development of the discourse:

## 2.1 Arts education between empowerment and othering

A currently published dissertation thesis by Nina Stoffers deals with cultural participation by way of music in the context of trans-cultural children and youth education for Romani people. Starting out from observing the many promises and claimed impact in the discourse on arts education as a means for fighting inequality, the author asks what exactly is meant by cultural participation as mentioned in the projects under analysis, of which actual aesthetic-artistic and educational elements it consists, and how cultural participation develops in terms of processes and performance. Nina Stoffers locates her research topic in the tension area of empowerment and othering and approaches it while starting out from a point of view which connects musical-sociological, musical-ethnological and education-scientific perspectives (Stoffers in print).

## 2.2 Impacts of arts education from a discourse-analytical point of view

Anna Chrusciel in her contribution "Messen, Ordnen, Bewerten. Eine diskursanalytische Betrachtung von Wirkungsanliegen Kultureller Bildung" (Chrusciel 2017) argues from a power-critical, post-colonialist point of view in support of a discourse-analytically informed way of dealing with the question about the impacts of artistic-educative projects of arts education. In this context, the author asks which questions, from this point of view, would have to be asked by impact research and which insights this would consequently produce. Against this background Chrusciel suggests "to look at majority society and its hegemonic orders" and "to look for the 'blind spots', for those positions which do not appear at all or only while being marginalized" (Chrusciel 2017, p. 53).

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<sup>8</sup> For an example, against the background of the refugee topic – which is also much discussed in the context of arts education – we may refer to the publication "Geflüchtete und Kulturelle Bildung. Format und Konzepte für ein neues Praxisfeld", edited by Maren Ziese and Caroline Gritschke.

## 2.3 Diversity as a topic of further education

Starting out from some accompanying research, Nana Eger and Constanze Schulte in their contribution "*Wer sind überhaupt DIE? Arbeitsprinzipien und Rahmenbedingungen für Fortbildungen in der Kulturellen Bildung im Kontext Diversität*" (Eger & Schulte 2017) present first insights concerning the topical field of diversity in the context of further education offered by arts education. Starting out from their analysis and by providing empirical evidence, the authors identify the principles of biographicity, reflectivity, diversity and physicality as contributing to further education in the context of arts education with a focus on diversity, from which first conclusions regarding a successful practice of arts education may be derived.

The latter contributions were included into the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung* which happened in Wolfenbüttel in autumn, 2016, under the motto "From Myths to Insights? The Presence and Future of Empirical Research on Arts Education".<sup>9</sup> If the exemplarily presented contributions deal with topical points and issues relevant for the perspective, it is another goal of our congresses to discuss methodical and methodological research approaches and to develop them further. Against this background, in the following some current developments will be outlined and a focus on interaction research will be suggested.

## 3. The transformation of the methodology of the research on arts education

### 3.1 From educational theory to empirical research, from "promises" to "evidence"

In recent years arts education has increasingly been dealing with the effects expected from the field on the one hand and with the empirically proven impacts on the other (Bockhorst, Reinwand-Weiss, & Zacharias 2012; Fink, Hill, Reinwand-Weiss, & Wenzlik 2012; Fink, Hill, & Reinwand-Weiss 2015; Rittelmeyer 2016; Konietzko, Kuschel & Reinwand-Weiss 2017) or, to have it pointedly: with promised effects (Ehrenspeck 1998) on the one hand and with evident impact (see chapter 3.3 of this article) on the other.

Traditionally, two demands on arts education are formulated: "Whereas some consider arts education to be solely (...) located in leisure time activities and expect impacts only IN the arts, others assume exaggerated expectations towards education BY the

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<sup>9</sup> A number of contributions to the congress have been published in the volume "Von Mythen zu Erkenntnissen? Empirische Forschung in der Kulturellen Bildung" (Konietzko et al. 2017).

arts" (Reinwand-Weiss 2013, p. 111, capital letters in the original; similar in: Dietrich, Krinninger, & Schubert 2012). Increasingly there is also a demand for a societal-social effect by the arts (Reinwand-Weiss 2013). Concerning both demands, one increasingly demands that there is evidence for them being met; there is increasing research in this respect.

### 3.2 Educational theory or empirical research?

In recent years, both in aesthetic education and in cultural education (for a delimitation of these fields see: Reinwand-Weiss, 2012) a turn from educational theory towards empirical research can be observed. Orientation is less expected from educational philosophy and historical educational science (concerning questions such as: "What is arts education?") but from empirical research (on questions such as: "What are the effects of arts education?"). In this context, in arts education there exist both qualitative-empirical and quantitative-empirical approaches (on this see Fink et al. 2012, Fink et al. 2015, Rittelmeyer 2016, Konietzko et al. 2017, or publications at "Kulturelle Bildung Online").<sup>10</sup> This development comes along with the current trend of preferring empirical, more precisely: social-scientific or psychological-natural-scientific approaches instead of those of the humanities (see *Excursus* on p. 158).

### 3.3 From education to impact?

It can be observed that in arts education increasingly the concept of "impact" becomes significant<sup>11</sup> and that there is the danger that the concept of "education" loses its significance.<sup>12</sup> Current research studies try to make the (positive) impact of arts education more tangible (Fink et al. 2012, Fink et al. 2015, Rittelmeyer 2016, Konietzko et al. 2017). At several levels this is helpful for the discipline, from improved practice to more exact theoretical models. There is only the problem that some research studies or their public reception are little differentiated. For example, one would have to distinguish between impacts on the individual, on the social field, on the political and social

<sup>10</sup> The two BMBF funds – for arts education and for digitalisation in the context of arts education – or the research fund "Kulturelle Bildung" of the Mercator Foundation provide evidence for this turn while at the same time working in its support.

<sup>11</sup> This can be observed e. g. when researching the FIS literature database, where the term "effect" or the keyword "impact research" are hardly found in the context of arts education prior to 1990.

<sup>12</sup> In the education-scientific discourse it is observed that increasingly the term "competence" replaces the term "education" (Tillmann, 2016, p. 12). The question of why cultural research prefers using the concept of impact instead of the concept of competence deserves further research.

space (Reinwand-Weiss 2013, p. 117), between aesthetic, social, emotional, cognitive, societal and political impacts (*ibid.* p. 118).

Furthermore, impact research faces epistemic and methodological challenges: How can the individuality of impacts be researched, that is e. g. the biographic conditionality of an impact on a certain participant or the social-spatial conditionality of an impact on a certain problem school? How can the complexity of impacts be reasonably researched? And how are impacts reasonably represented, e. g. by way of measurement or by way of case examples? It is also interesting that in most cases only certain, that is desired or somehow "positive" impacts of arts education are of interest but not e. g. distinction, which is indeed also a kind of impact. Thus, in this case a normative setting would be implicitly and tacitly made even before research has been started.

Most of all, however, the basic paradigm would have to be put into question: "By impact the result of a cause is described, however one-dimensional cause-effect models are generally not possible for arts education" (Reinwand-Weiss 2015, no page given).<sup>13</sup> Thus, if arts education was limited to one-dimensional impact research, one would start out from an inappropriate model.

Furthermore, one would have to ask about the motivation of research. Joachim Ludwig criticises a kind of research which "(is) interested in learning only in so far as learning is the criterion for the success or failure of the analysed didactic actions" (Ludwig 2012, p. 81). This criticism would have to be extended on a kind of research which is interested in arts education only in so far as impact is the criterion for the success or failure of the legitimations of educational acting, the project or the discipline. This raises the question: Who wants to provide evidence for meeting demands on arts education, and to whom? And why? Perhaps the research on the impacts of arts education is less interested in gaining insights than in legitimization. At a time when cultural institutions and projects come under legitimization pressure (and thus under economic pressure), arts education and its research may indeed also serve for legitimization (Fink, Götzky & Renz 2017). Precisely for this reason it would be important to not bow to alien logics (that is e. g. emphasizing transfer effects<sup>14</sup> on language skills) but to drive on appropriate and subject-specific legitimizations of arts education (that is e. g. the educating impacts of aesthetic experiences as an intrinsic value).

<sup>13</sup> Currently, several authors demand a different view at impact or suggest an extended concept of impact (e. g Sons, 2017, Ludwig, 2014, Hill, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> This is not meant as in principle arguing against the researching of transfer effects. However, we speak out in favour of building the legitimization of cultural education not exclusively on these transfer effects.

*Excursus: The debate on epistemic and methodological transformation in the educational sciences*

When dealing with methodical or methodological transformations in arts education, it is worth looking at the situation of the educational sciences. There, so called empirical educational research becomes increasingly predominant: "Studies which, based on extended random samples and by way of quantitative-empirical methods, analyse most of all the subject-related skills of adolescents – and which, in terms of theory, are most of all oriented at the effectiveness and efficiency of educational institutions" (Tillmann 2016, p. 7); the best known example are the PISA studies (recently: Prenzel, Sälzer, Klieme & Köller 2013). For years there has been a lively debate on "correct" empirical research (an overview is provided by a special edition of the leading german journal in educational sciences, "Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft", in particular: Tillmann 2016). At the same time the fact that there is also non-empirical research and that it delivers important contributions to science is threatened by sinking into oblivion.

Tillmann describes that sometimes among the critics of empirical educational research "the debate is dominated by unbridled polemics" (Tillmann 2016, p. 8), whereas empirical educational research mostly ignores any criticism (even where it is presented soberly) (Tillmann 2016, p. 9 ff.). He structures the debate into seven fields, two of which are significant here:

- Education-theoretical debate. It pursues the question of what education is or if the studies measure education or something else (and what this "something else" is then). Connected to this is the question if by way of "standardised tests" such as PISA there happens an implicit fixation to certain measurable and thus relevant factors and if everything else is neglected; if there happens a levelling and standardisation of educational demands or goals or demanded skills. And, finally, if the perspective of a cognition-theoretical psychology of learning is adopted or if learning must be understood e. g. as social behaviour (Ludwig 2014, p. 181).
- Discipline-political debate on evidence-basing. Given the development of "evidence-based education" which intends to stringently work its guidelines out of research to this way achieve a success guaranty, these issues are discussed: Can research provide guidelines? Must educational and education-political/-administrative action immediately conclude from research results? And would that be desirable (if it indeed neutralises educational reflectivity)?

### 3.4 On the necessity of a methodological discourse in arts education

In the research on arts education we find historical, systematic and education-theoretical or education-philosophical views. Traditionally, also qualitative-empirical research

contributes much to the further development of the discipline (an overview is provided by Fink et al 2012, Fink et al. 2015 as well as at the online platform "Kulturelle Bildung Online"). Now quantitative-empirical research becomes increasingly important, which in this field is often done by other disciplines (a current overview is provided by Konietzko et al. 2017). Disputes about the "interpretational sovereignty" over arts education cannot be avoided.

In our opinion, the various approaches should not be played against each other; indeed a variety of research approaches also allows for broader insights into the field of arts education. Furthermore, each individual research approach has its own advantages and disadvantages.

Yet still, a more thorough discourse in terms of education theory and discipline policy is necessary:

- 1) What is meant by arts education? How could the discipline itself give reasons to such a way of understanding? How could this way of understanding be maintained even under a higher pressure of legitimization?
- 2) How could arts education be reasonably researched? How could the results of such a research then influence practical work?

This discourse must (also) happen at the epistemic and methodological levels. Indeed, also in arts education we observe ever more methodical reflection and further development (again: Fink et al. 2012, Liebau, Jörissen & Klepacki 2014, Fink et al. 2015, Rittelmeyer 2016). Nevertheless, an epistemic and methodological discourse at congresses or in publications should be intensified. In the following, some problem fields shall be identified this discourse would have to deal with.

#### 3.4.1 Problem fields at the epistemic level

Education-theoretical approaches are in tendency normative, whereas empirical approaches are basically descriptive (which becomes obvious, for example, by the term "reconstructive social research", Bohnsack 1991). Both result in epistemic challenges:

- In case of normative approaches there is the question of how norms develop and how the decision to orient at certain norms is made (König & Zedler 2007, p. 31 ff.). It has far reaching consequences if e. g. observed processes are considered education against certain backgrounds or not. Additionally there is the problem of how concrete guidelines can be derived from educational theories (*ibid.* p. 34 ff.). The history of the educational sciences is full of such debates.
- In case of empirical approaches, that is descriptive and retrospective approaches, it stays unclear how thought could be directed at the future: How could we conclude from an actual state to an intended state (*ibid.* p. 80 ff.)? Furthermore, there is the question of both the general and the particular measurability of phenomena

(Chalmers 2007, p. 35 ff.). After all, there is also the problem of the implicit theoretical frame: Who sketches a research design, is (more or less explicitly) oriented at theories concerning the topic and the method. Thus, it must be taken into consideration “that scientific facts are not at all just given but must be construed [and] that, to a degree which should not be neglected, they depend on the knowledge they require (...)" (ibid. p. 49).

### *3.4.2 Problem fields at the methodological level*

Arts education is characterized by “complex and iterative networks of effects” (Kuschel 2017, p. 8). This raises the question of how these must be appropriately researched. Which theoretical frames are appropriate? Which subject and action theories as well as educational theories and ideas of the topic of cultural education are suitable? Building on this, we must choose a reasonable focus, that is an appropriate way of operationalisation or case construction. And it is indispensable that results are connected to each other – and that finally they must be connected to the theoretical frame again. In terms of methodology, here also a debate on the possibilities of the connection of heterogeneous research works would be necessary (in the sense of “mixed methods”). Here, a look at reference disciplines such as the educational or social sciences makes sense.

It is also crucial how research affects practical work. In our opinion, this cannot be successful by way of knowledge transfer alone (which would, among others, include a positivist understanding of knowledge as well as a hierarchical relation of science and practical work) but only by way of a cooperation of research and practice.

Furthermore, it is necessary to take “reflected perspectives” (see Kuschel 2017, p. 8), a “discrimination-critical point of view, sensitised by historical, post-colonial, trans-cultural and gender-specific references” even towards the “researching subjects and their ideological inclusion into the field itself” (Kuschel 2017, p. 9). There are questions like these ones: Who does research for whom and what? And in how far becomes research relevant for whom or what? The currently predominant legitimisation pressure stimulates certain kinds of research as well as their support and media coverage. Now, however, different research methods allow for different kinds of legitimisation. Thus, what we need is also a debate about the kind of legitimisation the discipline is supposed to be based on.

### *3.5 Dealing methodologically with interaction in the context of arts education – a currently running project of the Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung*

Interaction theories as they have been developed by the social sciences already since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – e.g. pragmatism and symbolic interactionism

(Dewey, Mead, Blumer), ethno-methodology (Garfinkel), frame analysis (Goffman), situational analysis (Clarke) and phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, Waldenfels, Koller, Brinkmann) – do not understand social reality as being objectively given but as being created by interaction and thus as constantly changing (Münch 2007).

They are particularly suitable for the research of arts education, as social behaviour is indeed not imagined as a mono-causal cause-effect context but as being of a process nature and interactive. Furthermore, these theories take the situatedness of social behaviour (such as at a museum), frames (e. g. by way of institutions), discourses (e. g. on contemporary dance) as well as the interpretation and negotiation of interpretations (e. g. “Is this art?”) into consideration.

The often rather open, also non-formal or informal settings of arts education allow for the most different interactions; the variety and intensity of interactions make the educational potential of the discipline. If, for example, participants in a project explore works of art, start exchanges with artists, to then jointly create their own works of fine art, precisely the variety and heterogeneity of these interactions is of particular value. The quality of interaction is thus a crucial factor for the ‘success’ or quality of cultural education (Hill 2013).

It must be expected that the use of interaction theories allows for a reasonable and appropriate empirical approach at the educational impacts of arts education and for developing an appropriate understanding, perhaps an extended, interactive concept of effect. Thus, building on preliminary works by its members (for an overview: Fink et al., 2012, Liebau et al., 2014, Fink et al., 2015), the *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung* will make interaction theories a focus of its activities. This comes along with developments happening in the educational sciences and aiming at combining educational theory and theories of social interaction (e. g. Brinkmann, 2015, from the *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung*: Sons, 2017, Hofmann, 2015, Ludwig, 2014).

The goal is the further development of interaction theories for the purpose of analyzing aesthetic and artistic educational processes. This provides the field with further opportunities: theories and methodologies classified as interaction theories are connectable both to the educational theory of the humanities and to empirical educational research as well as to other research contexts. Interaction theories are essential reference theories for cultural studies, psychology, sociology and for the educational sciences. Thus, in the context of our Network theoretical frames and methodologies for cultural education are developed which are appropriate to the topic and interdisciplinarily connectable.

We may not expect to make different kinds of knowledge a unity simply by help of one single frame theory. Yet still, a discourse on interaction theories may result in distinguishing between the respective problems, in making them connectable to each other, “in discussing adjustment and communication problems and in again referring

them to the problem of constituting an education-scientific research field" (Benner & Brüggen 2000, p. 255).

## Conclusion

Transformation processes influence not only the practice of arts education but also the research on it. To this there also belongs the fact that arts education and research on it are included into changing disciplinary legitimization discourses. These aspects result in challenges for the research on arts education the *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung* reacts to: starting out from current research approaches, it is dedicated to the (further) development of methods which are appropriate to the topic and do justice to the various and complex topics of arts education. Apart from taking critical and sensitive perspectives which also reflect on the role of the researcher and on one's own inclusion into the field, at the methodological level interactional framings are given a crucial role. Against this background, the here presented article sketches one attempt by the *Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung*: the intensified dealing with interaction theories. Finally, the critical taking up of formulated expectations towards effect and taking a position to them demand future research in the field.

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